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United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 59 of Security Council resolution 2409 (2018). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period from 29 June to 28 September 2018. The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political developments since my previous update on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 (S/2018/786); outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence, as well as the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians; and provides information on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The political situation was marked by political and judicial activities surrounding the registration process of candidates for the presidential and national and provincial legislative elections. On 3 September, the Constitutional Court ruled on the appeals of four of the six presidential candidates who had been declared ineligible by the Independent National Electoral Commission on 24 August. The Court upheld the ineligibility of Jean-Pierre Bemba, the leader of the Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC), ruling that the International Criminal Court had convicted him for witness tampering through corruption, which was an aggravating factor. The Constitutional Court rejected the appeal of former Prime Minister Adolphe Muzito, who had been declared ineligible for conflict of interest, noting that his claim to be reinstated as a presidential candidate was unsubstantiated. The Court, however, upheld the appeals of former Prime Minister Samy Badibanga and opposition leader Marie-Josée Ifoku and ordered the Commission to reinstate them as presidential candidates, as they had provided evidence that they held Congolese citizenship.

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3. The Secretary-General of MLC, Eve Bazaïba, stated that the ruling of the Constitutional Court was a political decision intended to disqualify a serious contender and, in so doing, tarnished the image of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 4 September, Mr. Bemba declared to the press that the judiciary was being manipulated to disqualify any heavyweight candidate who posed a serious challenge to the presidential candidate of the ruling majority. He added that the Government was setting the stage for a sham election on 23 December. Several other opposition leaders voiced similar concerns and criticisms. The Minister of Information and spokesperson of the Government, Lambert Mende, rejected the allegations of Mr. Bemba and urged him to respect the decision of the Court, the Constitution and the rule of law. In addition, on 4 September, the Court upheld the decision of the Independent National Electoral Commission to declare ineligible presidential candidates Antoine Gizenga, a former Prime Minister, and opposition leader Jean-Paul Moka for procedural errors during the registration process and lack of proof of payment of registration fees, respectively.

4. On 12 September, opposition leaders Adolphe Muzito, Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi, Félix Tshisekedi, Jean-Pierre Bemba, Moïse Katumbi and Vital Kamerhe met in Brussels and issued a joint communiqué in which they stressed the need for holding free, democratic, transparent and inclusive elections on 23 December, in line with the political agreement of 31 December 2016 and the electoral calendar. Among other things, they rejected the decision of the Independent National Electoral Commission to use voting machines, requested the removal of alleged fraudulent voters from the electoral roll, called for the swift implementation of confidence-building measures, urged the Southern African Development Community to deploy a regional force to ensure security during the electoral period and demanded that candidates declared ineligible "on political grounds" be allowed to take part in the elections. On the same day, the Minister of Information stated in a radio interview that the meeting had discredited those Congolese, who had no sense of national dignity after 58 years of independence.

5. From 10 to 12 September, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, Didier Reynders, visited South Africa, Angola and the Republic of the Congo, where he exchanged views with senior government officials on a wide range of issues, including the situation in the Great Lakes region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 11 September, in Luanda, Minister Reynders and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Manuel Domingos Augusto, issued a joint communiqué in which they noted, among other things, the importance of a truly inclusive process leading to credible, free and transparent elections on 23 December. On 12 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued a communiqué in which he stressed the rejection by the Government of any interference by neighbouring countries and bilateral partners in the electoral process and called for the strict respect of the sovereignty of his country.

6. The Independent National Electoral Commission continued preparations for the holding of elections on 23 December and published the provisional voter register, which included 40,287,385 voters, on 3 September. The Commission noted that 5,381,763 duplicates and multiple registrations and 902,290 minors had been removed from the register.

7. On 19 September, the Commission published the final list of presidential candidates, which included 21 candidates. On the same day, it published the final list of candidates for national legislative elections, with 15,355 candidates competing for 500 National Assembly seats. As for the final list of candidates for provincial legislative elections, 19,640 candidates, comprising 17,284 men (88 per cent) and 2,356 women (12 per cent), are contesting 715 seats.

8. The Commission, in line with the Government's decision to assume full financial and logistical responsibility for the elections, carried on with the technical and logistical preparations for the elections. MONUSCO continued to engage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the need to give landing clearance to the air assets prepositioned in Entebbe, Uganda.

9. The second and last ordinary parliamentary session of the year opened on 15 September. The Speaker of the National Assembly, Aubin Minaku, and the President of the Senate, Léon Kengo wa Dondo, noted that emphasis should be put on the electoral process and the swift adoption of the 2019 budget.

10. The Government and the National Follow-up Committee continued to make efforts towards the implementation of the national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Government also continued to call upon the other signatories to the Framework to honour their commitments.

B. Economic developments

11. The macroeconomic framework of the Democratic Republic of the Congo showed signs of stabilization, as inflation continued to decelerate slightly. The Congolese franc also remained relatively stable, largely owing to a year-long increase in key commodity prices on international markets. Those commodities (cobalt, copper and oil) had, however, begun to experience a serious downturn during the reporting period. On 10 July, the Banque centrale du Congo announced that its foreign exchange reserves had risen to $1.2 billion in the first half of 2018, maintaining their upward trend.

C. Security situation

12. The security situation remained fragile in some parts of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in Beni, Lubero and Masisi territories in North Kivu, and on the high plateaux of Uvira, the border areas of Maniema and Tanganyika provinces, and in Shabunda territory in South Kivu, where armed groups continued to carry out destabilizing activities. The situation deteriorated in parts of Haut-Uélé province, as a result of cross-border movements of South Sudanese armed elements, while in Ituri province, violence between Hema and Lendu communities continued to decrease. However, clashes occurred in mid-September between Lendu militia and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). In the western part of the country, some areas of the Kasai region continued to grapple with the illegal activities of Kamuina Nsapu and Bana Mura militias, and there were reports of human rights violations by some national security forces.

1. Ituri province

13. In Ituri, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) continued to commit exactions on civilians and to carry out attacks against FARDC. Violence against civilians, including raids and looting of villages, was perpetrated by FRPI, which carried out seven raids in Aveba and Gety on 14 and 15 July. Five other raids took place in the same area between 21 and 23 July. In addition, on 11 and 12 August, FRPI looted villages in the general area of Bavi and Bogoro, to the north of Aveba and Gety.

14. Elsewhere in Ituri, in Djugu territory, intercommunal violence has decreased significantly since April 2018. However, some isolated incidents between Hema and Lendu communities occurred in August, and there was a spike of clashes between

FARDC and Lendu militias in September. On 3 August, suspected Hema young people injured a Lendu woman in Djokwa (65 km north-east of Bunia). On the same day, individuals allegedly from the Lendu group burned houses belonging to Hema people in Tsu village, in the Tchomia area. On 26 August, two FARDC soldiers were killed in Wassa village, allegedly by Lendu assailants. In an apparent retaliation operation, FARDC reportedly looted civilians in the Lendu villages of Djailo and Loko. On 15 September, in Djugu territory, militia members allegedly from the Lendu community attacked FARDC position in Muvaramu (80 km north-east of Bunia), stealing weapons and ammunition and killing nine FARDC soldiers and six civilians. Further attacks by suspected Lendu militia members took place on 18 September against four FARDC positions in Gobi, Jiro, Nyoro and Ziro, reportedly killing three soldiers. FARDC captured three assailants. In response, FARDC launched operations that resulted in the killing of eight militia members and two FARDC soldiers and in the recovery of weapons.

2. North Kivu and South Kivu

15. In North Kivu, after a lull, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) resumed in July attacks against FARDC, MONUSCO and civilians in Beni territory. Most attacks targeting FARDC took place along the Eringeti-Oicha and Mbau-Kamango axes. On 12 July, a clash between ADF and FARDC in the PK13 neighbourhood in the Mbau area resulted in one FARDC soldier missing in action. On 14 July, ADF attacked FARDC in Mapiki and Masulukwede in the Oicha and Mavivi areas, respectively, resulting in the killing of three civilians and one FARDC soldier. On 24 August, an attack by suspected ADF elements on an FARDC position in Ngadi (on the Beni-Mavivi road) resulted in the killing of 17 FARDC elements and the theft of weapons and ammunitions. Suspected ADF elements and MONUSCO troops clashed on several occasions. On 6 July, suspected ADF elements ambushed MONUSCO troops in Boikene and injured two peacekeepers. On 29 July, a group of suspected ADF elements opened fire on the MONUSCO company operating base in Semuliki, triggering an exchange of fire. On 3 September, two MONUSCO peacekeepers were injured in an ambush by suspected ADF elements in the Ngadi area. Civilians continued to be the target of attacks by suspected ADF elements, resulting in the killing of at least 120 civilians since January. On 22 and 23 July, the bodies of six civilians reportedly killed by ADF were discovered in the Mavivi-Masulukwede area. On 2 August, ADF abducted 14 civilians, whose bodies were found in the jungle surrounding Boikene on 7 August. On the same day, suspected ADF abducted 15 civilians in Ngere-Mwalika (30 km south of Beni). On 9 September, simultaneous attacks by alleged ADF elements on villages on the Beni-Mavivi road resulted in the death of a civilian and triggered a displacement of population towards the city of Beni.

16. Further south, Mai-Mai Mazembe groups, Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and Mai-Mai Charles continued to destabilize the Butembo-Lubero area. NDC-R ran a parallel administration in the Kasugho area (45 km west of Lubero) until mid-August. On 20 July, NDC-R temporarily detained 45 civilians in Kasugho for failing to pay the armed group's illegal taxes. On 3 August, up to 150 people were detained for the same reason. Twenty-five people remained in detention as at 5 August. The exactions continued until 14 August, when FARDC launched an operation against NDC-R elements and captured their strongholds in Kagheri and Kasugho. However, NDC-R reinforced its positions and clashed with other Mai-Mai groups on 31 August. On 14 September, NDC-R occupied the Pitakongo village (55 km west of Kirumba).

17. Mai-Mai Charles demonstrated resilience after sustaining several FARDC attacks. On 11 July, its members attacked an FARDC position in Chondo (40 km

north-west of Nyamilima). The situation in areas along Lake Edward remained tense owing to a combination of the group's presence, disputes over border demarcation with Uganda and illegal fishing activities. Tension started to rise following the arrest of 46 Congolese fishermen by Ugandan naval forces on 4 May. On 5 July, at least seven Ugandan nationals (four members of the Uganda People's Defence Forces and three civilians) and three Congolese (two members of FARDC and one civilian) were killed during a clash on Lake Edward, near Kyavinyonge.

18. In Masisi territory, there was internal fighting between two rival factions of the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) in the general area of Nyabiondo. Clashes between APCLS "Colonel" Janvier (supported by some Nyatura groups) and APCLS-Mapenzi started in early 2018 and intensified until July, resulting in a massive population displacement towards Nyabiondo and Pinga, as well as sexual violence and killings. The situation returned to normal when "Colonel" Janvier withdrew from his stronghold in Lukweti and reportedly fled to Kalungu on the border of Masisi and Walikale territories.

19. In South Kivu, the security situation was marred by violence between the Banyamulenge and other communities, notably the Bembe, and their respective armed groups on the high plateaux of Uvira. On 7 July, 10 civilians died in a clash between those groups in the Balala-Nord groupement, at the border of Fizi and Uvira territories. On 8 July, Ngomino (a Banyamulenge armed group) clashed with Mai-Mai groups in Kangwe (80 km north-west of Minembwe), resulting in the deaths of two civilians, the burning down of 20 houses and the displacement of civilian populations. Intercommunal violence in the area led to the displacement of around 76,000 people. The border area of Burundi and Uvira territory remained a zone of tension, with elements allegedly belonging to the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) of Burundi regrouping in the Ruzizi Plain. The movement of those elements in areas of Fizi and Uvira territories has increased since the beginning of September. An attack by FNL elements on a Burundian border post on 14 September resulted in the killing of two FNL elements and one Burundian soldier.

20. After a lull of a few months, fighting resumed in mid-September between FARDC and Mai-Mai Yakutumba on the Kilembwe axis (in the border areas of South Kivu and Maniema provinces and close to Tanganyika). Clashes occurred between FARDC and a coalition of Mai-Mai Malaika and Mai-Mai Yakutumba in areas surrounding Minembwe. On 18 September, FARDC elements were allegedly ambushed by a group of Mai-Mai elements in Mutombo (15 km north of Minembwe), reportedly resulting in the killing of 15 FARDC soldiers.

21. Civilians in Shabunda territory remained affected by exactions perpetrated by Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki groups during the reporting period. The upsurge of violence that began in early 2018 continued during the reporting period. Among other incidents, on 19 July, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki (Kazimoto factions) abducted 15 civilians in Nyambembe. On 23 July, Kazimoto factions attacked and looted the village of Mulimbwa (90 km north-east of Shabunda).

3. Tanganyika province

22. The activities of Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale, Bafuliro and Twa militias posed the main threats to civilians and security challenges to FARDC in northern Tanganyika, notably in the Bendera area, in Kalemie territory. In early July, Mai-Mai groups established a parallel administration in the Lambo-Katenga groupement (west of Bendera) and committed multiple exactions against civilians, including looting, extortion and ambushes. On 10 July, they abducted 30 civilians, including 16 women, in Mutupeke (36 km north-west of Bendera). Towards the end of July, FARDC redeployed troops from Pweto and Kasomeno (160 km north-east of Lubumbashi) to

Bendera and Nyunzu, with a view to launching operations against Mai-Mai groups operating around mining sites. In response, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale elements reinforced their presence around Lambo-Katenga.

4. Haut-Uélé

23. In Haut-Uélé, the security situation along the border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan has deteriorated over the past two months owing to increasing cross-border movements of South Sudanese armed elements, notably the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO). The presence of that group was reported in the Nabiapay area (32 km north-west of Duru). On 12 July, there were clashes between security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and SPLM/A-IO elements in Limbamu (4 km south of Duru), Mogoroko (24 km north-west of Duru) and Nambia (7 km south-east of Duru). On 30 July, further clashes took place in Bangalu, Kpanangbala and Masombo, in the Dungu area. In addition, around 90,000 South Sudanese civilians have sought refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

5. Kasai region

24. The security situation in some parts of the Kasai region remained fragile owing to the renewed activities of Kamuina Nsapu and forced recruitment in Kamonia territory, Kasai province, in reaction to continued harassment of ethnic Luba communities by the Bana Mura militia. To the north-east, on the Mweka-Demba axis in Kasai Central, Kamuina Nsapu militia members led by Beya Tshombe consolidated their control over the local population, forcing some civilians to disavow State authority. There were also reports of isolated elements of national security forces committing human rights violations, including rape, killing and looting.

D. Humanitarian situation

25. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains worrying. According to the latest humanitarian needs assessment, conducted in October 2017, 13.1 million people need protection and humanitarian assistance, 7.7 million face food insecurity and 4.5 million are internally displaced. The country is home to more than 535,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, while more than 781,000 nationals of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have sought refuge in other countries in the region. To date, the 2018 humanitarian response plan has received $398.4 million, representing 24 per cent of its funding requirements, while the regional refugee response plan for refugees of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has only received 11 per cent of the $368.7 million required.

26. On 11 and 12 July, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs organized a workshop, with the participation of the relevant national authorities, to validate the process and methodologies for defining humanitarian needs in 2019. The objective was to present a shared analysis of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by October. To that end, joint teams of government representatives and humanitarian actors commenced assessing the humanitarian situation in priority provinces.

27. On 1 August, the Ministry of Health of the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in Mangina, 30 km north-west of Beni, North Kivu province, affecting also neighbouring Ituri. On 1 August, the Ministry notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of a new outbreak in the eastern part of the country. As at 29 September, a total of 159 confirmed and probable Ebola virus disease cases, including 104 deaths, had been reported. The outbreak

centred on the Mangina health zone, but the Beni and Butembo health zones were also significantly affected. The response to the epidemic has proved to be quite effective, owing in part to the close cooperation of the national health authorities with the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, as well as to the application of lessons learned from the recent Ebola virus disease outbreak in Équateur province. Functional coordination structures are in place and adequate capacities were deployed into the area within the first few days of the declaration of the outbreak. The United Nations system has provided extensive technical, logistical and security support to the response to the outbreak. The MONUSCO force has also played an instrumental role in Ebola response efforts, including by conducting operations to address the persistent threat of armed groups and to protect humanitarian space.

28. A comprehensive response plan covering the period from August to October is being implemented under the leadership of the Minister of Health, with support from WHO.

29. The cholera epidemic continued to spread, with 17,822 cases and 573 deaths reported across 13 of the 26 provinces as of late August. As part of the support of the humanitarian community for the health authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address the epidemic, the Humanitarian Coordinator allocated $3 million from the common humanitarian fund.

E. Human rights situation, justice and corrections

30. MONUSCO documented 1,135 human rights violations in July and August 2018, which represents a significant increase compared with the same period in 2017 (840 violations), but a decrease compared with April and May 2018 (1,183 violations), illustrating the worrying human rights situation in the country. More than 81 per cent of those violations occurred in conflict-affected provinces, with North Kivu being most affected, notably because of the activities of armed groups.

31. Throughout the country, 59 per cent of the violations were perpetrated by State agents, a decrease in comparison with the previous period, while armed groups and militias were responsible for the remaining violations. In July and August, 163 persons, including at least 36 women, were victims of extrajudicial killings or summary executions (with 33 victims attributed to State agents and 120 to armed groups), and more than 1,091 victims, including 97 women and 12 children, were illegally deprived of their freedom by either State agents or armed groups.

32. While some demonstrations and gatherings were held without incident, restrictions on democratic space continued to impede the establishment of an environment conducive to credible, peaceful and transparent elections. At least 134 violations of human rights linked to restrictions on fundamental freedoms and political rights, especially targeting civil society activists and members of political parties, were documented. Most violations occurred in Haut-Katanga, followed by North Kivu, where nine were perpetrated by armed groups, targeting notably journalists and community radios for having denounced the abuses perpetrated by those groups.

33. Some progress was made towards the implementation of the confidence-building measures provided for in the political agreement of 31 December 2016, but some challenges remain. On 13 July, 25 people were released from the National Intelligence Agency detention facility. However, prolonged detentions by the Agency without judicial review remained a matter of great concern. On 5 September, the Supreme Court upheld the sentencing to five years in prison of Franck Diongo, the leader of the opposition party Mouvement lumumbiste progressiste. He had been convicted on 28 December 2016 in a *flagrante delicto* procedure for illegally

detaining three soldiers of the Republican Guard. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the United Nations and national human rights organizations have called for his release, and the political agreement provides for his release as part of the confidence-building measures to be taken by the Government.

34. MONUSCO continued to provide technical and logistical support to military and civilian justice institutions in addressing cases of international crimes and other serious human rights violations and abuses in the eastern provinces and the Kasai region. On 26 July, the High Military Court, sitting in mobile court hearings in Bukavu (South Kivu), concluded appeal hearings on five priority cases identified by national courts. The Court confirmed the convictions and sentences rendered by the military court of South Kivu against senior FARDC officers and a member of the South Kivu provincial parliament for crimes against humanity in the "Colonel 106", "Kavumu" and "Marocain" cases. In the other two cases, the Court reduced to a two-year prison term the sentence of FARDC Colonel Becker, who had been convicted to 10 years in prison for crimes against humanity committed in Musenyi, Kalehe territory, on 21 September 2015, and it acquitted for lack of evidence an FARDC major and a civilian of violation of orders and illegal possession of weapons during the massacre of civilians that had occurred on 6 and 7 June 2016 in Mutarule, Uvira territory.

35. In North Kivu, in another priority case supported by MONUSCO, on 14 July, the military garrison tribunal of Goma convicted Dominique Buyenge of war crimes for the recruitment and use of children as combatants, rape and murder, and sentenced him to life imprisonment. In July, with MONUSCO logistical support, the military garrison tribunal of Bunia launched the trial of 72 persons charged with crimes against humanity, including one FARDC element and one Congolese National Police agent charged with rape during the mass atrocities perpetrated in Djugu, in March 2018.

36. In July, with the technical support of the MONUSCO Prosecution Support Cell in Beni, national security forces arrested three members of the Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo. They were arrested in the context of investigations into the attack launched by the armed group on Butembo city on 19 December 2016, which had resulted in the death of a MONUSCO peacekeeper.

37. On 26 July, MONUSCO identified 31 cases of prolonged detention in the Uvira district prison. Subsequent discussions with the prosecutor's office led to the release of seven detainees, the processing of 10 cases by the Uvira tribunal and the closing of the investigation into the other 14 detainees. Prisons nationwide continued to suffer from the irregular, delayed and inadequate provision of adequate nutrition and medical care to prisoners. MONUSCO recorded 28 deaths from malnutrition in the Bunia, Goma and Mbuji-Mayi prisons. MONUSCO continued to encourage national and provincial authorities to address the situation.

F. Sexual violence

38. In July and August 2018, MONUSCO documented the rape of and other acts of conflict-related sexual violence against at least 129 women, two men, and 39 children, indicating a worrying increasing trend. Most of the rapes occurred in South Kivu. On 25 July, MONUSCO informed the government authorities of the findings of a human rights investigation into rapes, mass rapes and other acts of sexual violence perpetrated by a coalition of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki combatants in the villages of Bimpanga, Kamungini, Keba and Wameli, in Shabunda territory, in April 2018. Although some survivors received medical care, the holistic response was insufficient. Consequently, from 5 to 11 September, MONUSCO supported the Panzi Foundation in the provision of medical, psychosocial and legal assistance to

207 persons, including 62 survivors of sexual violence. Meanwhile, MONUSCO continued its advocacy efforts for the opening of a judicial investigation.

39. MONUSCO continued to collaborate with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the implementation of the FARDC action plan against sexual violence, including by engaging with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Head of State on the Prevention of Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment. In the Kasai region, MONUSCO provided trainings to FARDC commanders on the fight against sexual violence, which included the signing of a declaration of commitment by 66 FARDC commanders to combating sexual violence in their ranks. Additional trainings for FARDC commanders were conducted in Goma, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. The action plan against sexual violence of the Congolese National Police was finalized and submitted for signature to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior.

G. Child protection

40. MONUSCO verified 176 grave violations against children through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. At least 158 children (14 girls and 144 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups, including the Forces combattantes abacunguzi, FRPI, Mai-Mai Mazembe and Nyatura, mainly in North Kivu. Three girls survived rape and other forms of sexual violence. Five children (two girls and three boys) were maimed and nine boys were abducted. One case of denial of humanitarian access was reported, in South Kivu.

41. On 11 July in Hombo, Walikale territory, North Kivu, Delphin Mbaenda, commander of Mai-Mai Kifuafua, signed a road map to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations of the rights of the child. A mechanism was set up for implementing the road map. On 18 July, in Ziralo, Kalehe territory, South Kivu, Raymond Kabihula, Commander of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki (Ngubito faction), released 38 children to MONUSCO and signed a road map for the prevention of child recruitment and other grave violations of the rights of the child. MONUSCO continued to engage 17 commanders of different armed groups in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu for the release of children and the implementation of road maps to end child recruitment.

III. Deployment of MONUSCO and implementation of its mandate

A. Strategic dialogue and exit strategy

42. There was no progress in the strategic dialogue between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO.

B. Preparations to address risks linked to the electoral process

43. MONUSCO took measures to address risks linked to the electoral process, including by conducting a series of table-top exercises with field offices to strengthen crisis management capacities in the event of electoral violence, with a view to updating local protection contingency plans and ensuring linkages with humanitarian contingency planning. In addition, an exercise was carried out with the Security Management Team to strengthen capacities for crisis management, mainly in

Kinshasa, with a focus on enhancing communications facilities within the wider United Nations country team.

44. The concept of operations of the Mission's police component includes provisions to address electoral risks, with a focus on collaboration with the Congolese National Police, notably through the training and awareness-raising of its intervention units, to enhance crowd-control capacities and respect for human rights. The MONUSCO police developed training and advocacy programmes for 4,600 Congolese National Police officers in intervention units to reduce the risk of the excessive use of force during demonstrations or public gatherings in the electoral period.

45. The concept of operations of the Mission's force is geared towards the protection of civilians in vulnerable areas during the electoral period, supporting election security and ensuring the security of United Nations personnel and premises. The MONUSCO force, in coordination with other relevant Mission components, will support national security forces, where appropriate, to promote a protective environment for civilians and provide early warning of electoral violence through monitoring and reporting. Areas of responsibility have been reassigned and the force's sector boundaries redrawn with a view to achieving a swift pre-electoral deployment by the end of November.

46. Further steps have been taken by MONUSCO to strengthen its mobile monitoring and response teams as an initial response to threats of violence or to gather information on incidents. This mechanism enables analysis and enhances the understanding of events in certain areas through early warning networks, in particular in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where MONUSCO has a limited presence. The mechanism will also support and provide a surge capacity, as necessary, for smaller field offices to address emerging political or security issues, especially in the lead-up to the elections.

C. Comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians

1. Mission-wide strategies

47. MONUSCO made progress in implementing the comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians. Two new Mission-wide strategies to address armed-group activities were developed for areas stretching from Ituri to Goma and covering South Kivu down to Haut-Katanga. The strategies entail such initiatives as local dialogue, stabilization, protective patrolling and the boosting of early warning capacities and rapid response to alerts, as well as support to justice and human rights activities. Progress was also made in developing targeted strategies to address the threat posed by armed groups, including ADF.

48. MONUSCO continues to implement the "protection through projection" concept. During the reporting period, MONUSCO deployed 59 standing combat deployments, mainly in response to threats posed to civilians by ADF, and to prevent and deter violence by other armed elements. The Intervention Brigade of the force around Beni thus deployed 34 deployments (58 per cent), three rapidly deployable battalions in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo deployed 10 (17 per cent), while the remaining 15 (25 per cent) were deployed by framework battalions and other MONUSCO force assets. Furthermore, MONUSCO continued to expand its Community Alert Network systems. The Network transmitted an average of 492 early warning alerts per month, mainly from North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika. The Government, MONUSCO or both actors responded to 87 per cent of those alerts. The alerts not responded to were in areas with limited presence of national security forces and areas of difficult access.

2. Field-level responses

49. On 31 July, in Beni territory, North Kivu, MONUSCO and FARDC launched a joint offensive operation against three Mai-Mai camps that were established close to the town of Beni and presented an imminent threat to civilians. The operation resulted in the destruction of the camps, the capture of a number of armed group elements and the seizure of weapons by FARDC. In addition, throughout August and September, MONUSCO increased the number of standing combat deployments and patrols in the Beni area, with the aim of increasing presence, situational awareness and engagement with communities. Still in the Beni area, MONUSCO also engaged customary chiefs, who signed a deed of commitment to addressing grievances and promoting peaceful cohabitation. Furthermore, MONUSCO supported a consultative committee for the resolution of customary conflicts in Beni. In Lubero territory, following the FARDC operation against NDC-R in August, MONUSCO deployed a Joint Protection Team to assess protection needs and risks, with a focus on reducing the risks of retaliatory acts by NDC-R against civilians.

50. In Djugu territory, Ituri province, MONUSCO continued to support the ongoing peace process following the outbreak of violence at the beginning of the year. MONUSCO maintained three deployments in key flashpoints, which assisted in creating a protective environment and enabled MONUSCO to respond to potential violence. The presence of MONUSCO also led to the return of internally displaced persons and contributed to the provincial government's efforts to address the underlying causes of violence between Hema and Lendu communities. MONUSCO continued to support the Government's peace-awareness campaign launched in June, with dialogues held among Djugu customary chiefs, young people and female leaders.

51. Starting on 9 July, in South Kivu, in response to the alarming situation in the Bijombo area of the high plateaux, MONUSCO deployed a series of standing combat deployments to stabilize the area and provide a protective environment for the provincial government to launch mediation efforts. The MONUSCO deployments had an immediate positive impact, with an end to large-scale attacks. MONUSCO civilian personnel deployed along with the standing combat deployments conducted investigations into human rights abuses, gathered further information on the situation and engaged in conflict-resolution efforts at the local level. Elsewhere in South Kivu, in Kalehe and Shabunda territories, in response to the violence affecting civilians, in particular women, MONUSCO conducted multiple long-range patrols to increase its presence in the area and encouraged the authorities to strengthen the presence of national security forces.

52. In Tanganyika province, MONUSCO continued to reinforce local protection committees in Kalemie and Nyunzu to address increasing insecurity. In August, in Haut-Katanga, in particular in Pweto territory, MONUSCO supported the provincial government's awareness-raising campaign on peaceful cohabitation between the Twa and Luba communities, which contributed to an improvement in the security situation and the return of internally displaced persons and of refugees from Zambia.

53. In July, in the Kasai region, MONUSCO deployed a standing combat deployment to Kamako, an important urban centre on the border between Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to stabilize the area and support the deployment of two Joint Protection Team missions. During those missions, MONUSCO engaged with local authorities and civil society to promote peaceful cohabitation between the Luba, Pende and Chokwe communities.

54. The Mine Action Service of the United Nations continued to contribute to the protection of civilians and the freedom of movement for MONUSCO and humanitarian personnel through explosive ordnance disposal activities before and

after operations against armed groups. The Service also provided support for the destruction of obsolete, surplus and unserviceable munitions and stockpiles of small arms ammunition held by troop-contributing countries.

D. Support for the sanctions regime imposed on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

55. The Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose mandate was extended by the Security Council in its resolution 2424 (2018), undertook, with the support of MONUSCO, its first visit to Kinshasa and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in early September, in line with its mandate. MONUSCO provided security-related advice and continued to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo in collaboration with the Group.

E. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

56. From July to mid-August, MONUSCO registered the surrender of 28 children associated with armed groups and 33 adult combatants of armed groups of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, operating chiefly in North Kivu. An additional 17 foreign combatants and dependants were registered, as well as two children associated with armed groups who were separated from ADF in Beni. MONUSCO also supported the awareness-raising visits of representatives of the regional follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants and their dependants to camps of the ex-Mouvement du 23 mars (ex-M23) in Uganda, from 19 to 25 July, and to the voluntary disarmament process camps of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in Kanyobagonga, Kisangani and Walungu, from 23 to 27 August. Those visits resulted in the repatriation of 13 ex-M23 members to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and five FDLR members to Rwanda.

57. MONUSCO is implementing 26 community violence reduction projects in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. These projects contribute to improving the security situation by involving young people at risk, ex-combatants and community members in income-generating activities, such as building community infrastructure, psychosocial support and vocational training. A number of labour-intensive infrastructure projects were completed, providing initial employment to ex-combatants and at-risk community members. Those projects included the rehabilitation of essential road segments, with the aim of improving access to remote areas, markets and commerce and facilitating the movement of national security forces and MONUSCO.

F. Stabilization

58. In July, the Prime Minister signed a decree creating 15 courts of appeal in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the new provinces created through the province restructuring, raising the total number of those courts to 27. Subsequently, 215 judges and prosecutors were appointed to the Supreme Court, the Council of State, the courts of appeal and public prosecutor's departments. In the absence of administrative courts, the courts of appeal will play a key role with respect to electoral disputes at the provincial level.

G. Progress in adjusting MONUSCO priorities, posture and presence

59. MONUSCO continued to streamline its civilian efforts, focusing primarily on the protection of civilians and support for the political process, including electoral support.

60. During the reporting period, MONUSCO initiated the implementation of the deployment of the Mission for 2018–2019, through the elections period. Following the adoption of the Mission's budget for the financial period 2018–2019, the Mission is adjusting its footprint further. As part of the restructuring of the force, MONUSCO had repatriated 1,528 troops by the end of August to make room for the two incoming rapidly deployable battalions, numbering 1,700 personnel. MONUSCO plans to base its fourth rapidly deployable battalion (Indonesia) in Tanganyika to address protection concerns in that area, and its fifth rapidly deployable battalion (Morocco) in the Kasai region. Once deployed, the force sector boundaries will be redrawn to ensure ease of command and control and align force sectors with field office areas of responsibility. MONUSCO continued to engage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the need to facilitate the expeditious entry into its territory of the weapons and equipment of the rapidly deployable battalions in order for MONUSCO to fulfil its task of protecting civilians, as mandated by the Security Council.

61. Meanwhile, the reconfiguration of the Intervention Brigade continued, with a view to making it more flexible, agile and able to both conduct offensive operations and protect civilians across North Kivu, while battalions from the central sector of the MONUSCO force, formerly deployed in Boikene, Butembo and Mavivi, were consolidated further south in North Kivu.

62. Plans were developed to make some adjustments to the deployment of the Mission's formed police units, which are to provide protection to civilians and United Nations staff and premises, in key urban hotspots. One such unit was expected to relocate from Bukavu to Lubumbashi by the end of September, and another from Bunia to Kisangani. By the end of October, one unit will relocate from Goma to Kisangani and another from Beni to Lubumbashi.

H. Assessment of the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel to protect civilians

63. In June 2017, MONUSCO started the systematic use of the measurement of force effectiveness process to assess the performance of its troops. The process combines operational readiness and contingent-owned equipment inspections with aspects of command and control. It also assesses the resolve of the units to implement assigned tasks related to the protection of civilians, the neutralization of armed groups and support for the Government's armed forces, in line with the campaign plan of the force. Critical assessment criteria include discipline, notably with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse and road traffic accidents. At the end of the inspection cycle, a force commander's assessment is issued. In the context of the implementation of the action plan to improve the safety of peacekeepers, this tool has become a key reference for reporting on the force performance and has influenced decisions about future force generation.

64. MONUSCO has populated the tool on a quarterly basis and a total of 44 assessments had been carried out by September, as required in resolution 2409 (2018). Of the 44 units evaluated, 75 per cent (33 units) were found to be above average, while the performance of 4.5 per cent (two units) was deemed to be substandard. Of the units found to be performing below average, key areas for improvement included training, equipment, conduct and discipline, and health.

65. The police component has also implemented a performance evaluation system based on objective criteria for both individual police officers and formed police units, with a view to assessing their capacity to implement mandated tasks, including the protection of civilians in urban areas through the integrated operational strategy for the fight against insecurity. Individual police officers were evaluated on a quarterly basis, with no performance issues identified thus far. Formed police units are evaluated through monthly operational inspections, and one unit was identified through this process as requiring reinforced capacity.

66. Both the force and police component used the assessment to address shortcomings and implement corrective measures. Those included training, targeted inspections and spot checks to confirm the serviceability of equipment, and specific training on how to prepare a robust response in case of patrols coming under attack by armed elements or an angry mob. Command and control field visits by the force and the police, as well as the MONUSCO civilian leadership, continue to be carried out on a regular basis to identify areas for improvement and ensure follow-up. The results of the evaluations carried out in the context of the measurement of force effectiveness process have also been taken into account in the planning and implementation of the ongoing reconfiguration of the MONUSCO force.

I. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

67. MONUSCO continued to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition to the internal preventive measures currently implemented, the Mission has engaged with the communities exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse with the aim of building their capacity to identify and process complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse, implemented community-based compliance mechanisms and intensified its outreach programme.

68. As far as the local population is concerned, this novel approach includes community awareness-raising, open-forum discussions and sharing the outcome of investigations and actions taken. As regards MONUSCO personnel, efforts focused on direct interaction with and support for troop-contributing countries, close monitoring of the behaviour of personnel, deterrent activities by military police patrols and the distribution of pocket cards on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. A risk management framework was also developed and implemented through an action plan. Accountability is implemented through a comprehensive coordination mechanism and the direct involvement of field-level managers and unit commanders.

69. MONUSCO also conducted mass awareness-raising campaigns in communities located in areas at risk, with a view to providing vulnerable and affected populations with safe and efficient reporting mechanisms and making them aware of the United Nations policy prohibiting sexual exploitation and abuse.

J. Gender considerations in mandate implementation

70. MONUSCO continues to make progress in improving and monitoring its gender responsiveness, using the gender markers accountability framework. Three quarters of the Mission's offices included in their priority functions concrete elements to measure how peace and security initiatives took into account the needs of women and men. For example, after analysing its sex-disaggregated data, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office increased the proportion of women among the beneficiaries of its capacity-building programme, from a fifth in 2017 to a third by the end of July 2018.

71. MONUSCO also supported young urban women in actively spreading the principles of peaceful communication among young people in vulnerable neighbourhoods in Kinshasa and in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, to prevent possible violent clashes with the police and the army before, during or after the elections. More than 1,000 young people (694 women and 330 men) were trained on how to voice their opinions while adopting a peaceful communication approach.

72. MONUSCO hosted weekly meetings with 22 female politicians affiliated with different political parties and civil society, to exchange views on the opportunities for and the challenges of being candidates and on how to help to mobilize voters and win seats.

K. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

73. From 29 June to 16 August, a total of 131 security- and safety-related incidents affecting United Nations staff, uniformed personnel, assets and operations were recorded throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those included 62 crime-related incidents, 51 hazard-related accidents, 11 incidents of civil unrest and 7 incidents attributed to armed conflict. Fifty-four national staff members and 27 international staff members were affected by those incidents.

74. In North Kivu, access to some areas within Beni territory remained a challenge, owing to continued sporadic clashes between ADF, Mai-Mai militias, FARDC and MONUSCO. As a result, movements of staff members to areas of operation of ADF were occasionally restricted or suspended.

IV. Observations

75. I am encouraged by continued progress in the preparations for the holding of elections on 23 December. I commend the leadership demonstrated by President Joseph Kabila and the efforts of the Independent National Electoral Commission to ensure that key milestones in the electoral process are met. The publication of the final list of candidates for the presidential, national and provincial legislative elections are encouraging steps. I regret, however, the low number of female candidates, despite commitments by political stakeholders to promoting actively the participation of women in the political and electoral process.

76. As the date of the elections draws nearer, I encourage key political actors to reach a consensus on outstanding contentious issues, including the use of voting machines and the voter register. I urge them to pursue dialogue and seek compromise in order to generate confidence in the electoral process and ensure a level electoral playing field for all. To this end, I reiterate my call to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to fully implement the confidence-building measures contained in the political agreement of 31 December 2016.

77. I remain concerned about the arbitrary arrests and lengthy detentions of opposition members and civil society activists by the intelligence services, as well as instances of repression of public demonstrations, all of which work against the creation of an environment conducive to holding credible, transparent and inclusive elections. I call upon the authorities to ensure that all citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo enjoy their civil and political rights.

78. I welcome the Government's decision to fully fund the elections and encourage it to ensure regular disbursements to the Independent National Electoral Commission in order to guarantee that key milestones in the electoral calendar are met. I reiterate

the readiness of the United Nations to provide technical and logistical support to the Commission, as mandated by the Security Council.

79. I remain deeply concerned by the security situation and the increase in the activities of armed groups in different provinces, especially renewed activities by ADF in North Kivu, as well as attacks on the civilian population, FARDC and MONUSCO, leading to the displacement of thousands of people, the destruction of livelihoods and the interruption of schooling. I am equally worried by the escalation of intercommunal violence in the Kasai region, South Kivu and Tanganyika. I urge the authorities to take the steps necessary to protect civilians, with the support of MONUSCO, and I call upon all stakeholders to act responsibly to promote social cohesion, especially during the electoral period. I am concerned about the continued activities of foreign armed elements on Congolese soil and recent clashes at the border.

80. Renewed intercommunal violence and armed group activities continue to have a negative impact on the humanitarian situation. Only 24 per cent of funding requirements for 2018 have been met so far, which undermines the ability of the United Nations to support the most vulnerable. It is therefore crucial that commitments made by donors be met, in order to close the financing gap quickly. I welcome the joint efforts of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the humanitarian community to work in a concerted manner to assess humanitarian needs in order to ensure the targeted and seamless delivery of humanitarian assistance in 2019.

81. The recurring outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires continued vigilance. I commend the Government for its swift response and leadership. The United Nations system, including WHO and its partners, remains committed to supporting the Government in its efforts to treat the victims of the disease and prevent it from spreading further.

82. Finally, I thank my Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her leadership and dedication, and all personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, as well as the troop- and police-contributing countries, for their commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also commend the efforts of regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

MONUSCO
September 2018
MONUSCO Headquarters
Force Forward Headquarters
Brigade Headquarters
Sector Headquarters
Formed Police Unit
Logistics base
Military Sector boundary
International boundary
Provincial boundary
National capital
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SOUTH SUDAN
UGANDA
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
RWANDA
BURUNDI
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ANGOLA
ZAMBIA
MALAWI
CONGO
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bangui
Kinshasa
Brazzaville
Luanda
Bujumbura
Kampala
Bandundu
Kisangani
Lubumbashi
Goma
Bukavu
Kindu
Kananga
Kolwezi
Mbuji-Mayi
Kalemie
Uvira
Moanji
Hombi
Sake
Adikivu & Kavumbu
Sango
Kivuanja
Rwindi
Nyungu
Itutambo

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General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 1 October 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to write to you once again as unarmed, defenceless Palestinian civilian protesters participating in the Great March of Return continue to be brutally killed by Israeli occupation forces for daring to raise their voices to protest the systematic violation of their human rights, to demand an end to Israeli occupation and siege and to call for freedom and return to their ancestral lands.

Friday, 28 September 2018, was the single bloodiest day of the Great March of Return protests since 14 May, the day on which Israeli occupying forces fatally injured more than 60 Palestinians. In this latest onslaught, the occupying forces killed seven Palestinian civilians. Among those killed were two young Palestinian boys, Nasir Azmi Musbeh, aged 12, and Mohammed Naif al-Houm, aged 14, as well as Mohammed Ali Mohammed Inshasi, aged 18, Iyad Khalil Ahmad al-Shaer, aged 18, Mohammed Bassam Mohammed Shakhsa, aged 24, Mohammed Ashraf al-Awawdeh, aged 25, and Mohammed Walid Haniyeh, aged 32. Moreover, on 24 September, yet another protester, Muhammad Fayiz Abu al-Sadiq, aged 21, was killed by Israeli occupying forces. Hundreds of other civilians have also been injured as a result of the live fire and other ammunition routinely unleashed by the occupying forces against the civilian population.

Israel's savage brutality against peaceful protesters on Friday, equivalent, in every meaning of the word, to terrorism, and carried out in full view of the international community, is characteristic of its actions throughout the Great March of Return, during which occupying forces have killed at least 198 Palestinians, including 31 children, 3 persons with disabilities, 3 paramedics and 2 journalists, and injured more than 20,000 people, many of them with life-changing and paralyzing injuries resulting from an illegal type of explosive ammunition that is designed to shatter bones.

None of the protesters, journalists or medics killed during the Great March of Return was armed or posed a lethal threat to Israeli soldiers. In a statement to the Human Rights Council, Human Rights Watch confirmed that it "has not documented instances where protesters posed an imminent threat to life". The killing of these

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civilians is cold-blooded murder and cannot be justified by any means. Humanitarian and human rights law are patently clear. Where is the moral outrage or the condemnation of such ongoing horrendous crimes? Why does moral outrage become selective when it comes to the lives of Palestinians?

That an occupying Power should feel immune from scrutiny in a situation where it is killing innocent civilians, children, women and men, violating the most basic principles of international law and human morality, and causing extensive human suffering and devastation, undoubtedly leads to ever-growing cynicism, particularly among the Palestinian people, who have been deprived from the protections of the rule of law and subjected to a glaring double standard for decades.

That an illegal occupation, which can only subsist through the breach of humanitarian and human rights law, should last for more than 51 years, with no concrete action to precipitate its end, undoubtedly risks destroying the credibility of the international system and of the whole edifice of international law, which the world has gone through wars and colossal human and material sacrifices to build, assert and defend.

What we demand — an end to this occupation and historical injustice — is no more than a call on the international community to respect and defend the universal principles and moral standards that it has itself developed and accepted as basic canons, all of which are in grave jeopardy at this critical moment.

And, while families mourn their dead, the medical structures in Gaza can barely function under the weight of the shocking number of injuries, compounded by more than a decade of Israel's illegally imposed blockade and restrictions on patients from leaving Gaza to receive life-saving medical treatment not available there. Hospitals are overwhelmed, reliant on only four hours of electricity a day and faced with fuel shortages, critically low levels of medical supplies, exhausted medics and nurses and a lack of specialist surgeons and doctors to carry out emergency limb reconstructive surgical interventions for the wounded.

At the same time, the socioeconomic situation in Gaza continues to deteriorate on a daily basis. On 25 September, the World Bank described Gaza's economy as being "in free fall" as a result of "a decade-long blockade and a recent drying-up of liquidity, with aid flows no longer enough to stimulate growth", leading to "an alarming situation with every second person living in poverty and the unemployment rate for its overwhelmingly young population at over 70 per cent." According to the World Bank Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza, "the economic and social situation in Gaza has been declining for over a decade, but has deteriorated exponentially in recent months and has reached a critical point. Increased frustration is feeding into the increased tensions, which have already started spilling over into unrest and setting back the human development of the region's large youth population."

The persistence of this situation for more than 11 years — of a mostly refugee civilian population held captive in one of the most densely populated strips of land on Earth, stripped of their basic rights and subjected to repeated massacres — will be remembered as one of the darkest chapters in history.

The plight of the Palestinian people as a whole remains a shameful injustice that must be brought to an end. For more than 70 years and 51 years respectively, they have been enduring two layers of brutal oppression: their dispossession since the Nakba in 1948 and the illegal foreign occupation of their land, which has forced a once-thriving society to live under decades of violent oppression, domination and control by Israel.

The continuation of this Nakba is illustrated most starkly in the case of the Palestinian Bedouin community in Khan Al Ahmar, east of Jerusalem, which has received yet another an ultimatum by the Israeli occupying forces to leave its lands and homes or else face the demolition of its village and forcible transfer of its

inhabitants. As stated by Amnesty International, "This act is not only heartless and discriminatory; it is illegal. The forcible transfer of the Khan Al Ahmar community amounts to a war crime. Israel must end its policy of destroying Palestinians' homes and livelihoods to make way for settlements." This unlawful act would also totally destroy the territorial contiguity of the occupied West Bank and the physical possibility of the two-State solution, proving yet again that this act constitutes part and parcel of Israel's illegal colonization campaign of our land.

The international community must not remain silent in the face of these blatant crimes being committed by Israel's brutal occupation machine and must ensure accountability and justice for the Palestinian people.

It is shocking that, despite Israel's occupation constituting one of the most well-documented situations in the world, with scores of eminent United Nations experts, lawyers and scholars alleging and proving that international crimes have been committed, no Israeli politician, military personnel or settler responsible for such crimes has ever been brought to justice. While domestic Israeli investigations are wholly inadequate, with Israeli courts serving solely the interests of the occupier and rubber-stamping Israeli crimes, the International Criminal Court is a viable independent judicial body capable of ending impunity for crimes committed against the Palestinian people, and we call upon all States to fully support its work.

In the light of Israel's ongoing, premeditated killing and maiming of unarmed protesters in Gaza and its imminent destruction of the village of Khan Al Ahmar, we again call on the international community to uphold its obligation to ensure the protection of the Palestinian civilian population.

Moreover, we shall continue to insist that the broader historical context be addressed. The international community must finally make Israel acknowledge that injustice and oppression are the cause of the cycles of crisis and conflict, and that only an end to its occupation and illegal policies can ensure peace and security, not only for Palestinians and Israelis, but also for the entire region. We thus appeal again to the international community, including the Security Council, to act, with responsibility and conscience, to bring an end to Israel's illegal occupation and to all of its crimes against the defenceless Palestinian civilian population and their land so that this cruel and tragic chapter of conflict and occupation can end and a chapter of peace, security and freedom can finally be opened.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 647 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 19 September 2018 (A/ES-10/795–S/2018/858), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations

United Nations S/2018/884

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 October 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 1 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 22 September to 1 October 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 1 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (22 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 11 incidents of gunfire: 6 in Aleppo Governorate and 5 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,938 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,021 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (23 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 15 incidents of gunfire: 12 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and 3 in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: in Khusham, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed; and in Shamir, Aleppo Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,940 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,025 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (24 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 13 incidents of gunfire: 9 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and 4 in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,940 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,024.94 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (25 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 21 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 13 in Ladhiqiyah, 7 in Aleppo and 1 in Idlib.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: in Husayniyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,941 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,026.89 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (26 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 22 incidents of gunfire: 12 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and 10 in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: in Dar'a, Dar'a Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,942 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,029 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (27 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 18 incidents of gunfire: 10 in Aleppo Governorate and 8 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Idlib Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: in Tall Shu'ayb, Aleppo Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,943 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,030.79 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (28 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 23 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 14 in Ladhiqiyah, 8 in Aleppo and 1 in Idlib.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: in Jayrud, Damascus Governorate, 300 food parcels with a total weight of 1.29 tons were distributed; and in Jayrud, Damascus Governorate, 130 particle board panels for the repair of school desks, with a total weight of 5.85 tons, were distributed.

In total, 1,945 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,038 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (29 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 24 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 15 in Ladhiqiyah, 7 in Aleppo and 2 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,945 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,038 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (30 September 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 12 incidents of gunfire: 9 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and 3 in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: in Salihiyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed; and in Suran, Aleppo Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,947 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,041.90 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (1 October 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 18 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: 10 in Ladhiqiyah, 6 in Aleppo, 1 in Hama and 1 in Idlib.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: in Adra, Damascus Governorate, 250 food parcels with a total weight of 1.07 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,948 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,042.97 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

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Letter dated 2 October 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Peru and Sweden, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, hereby transmit the summary of the meeting of the Informal Expert Group held on 4 September 2018 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 2 October 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

Summary of the meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 4 September 2018

On 4 September 2018, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ahead of the visit by the Security Council in October 2018. The members received a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Leila Zerrougui, experts from the Mission and representatives of the country team. The Special Representative provided a comprehensive overview of key developments since the previous meeting and of progress and challenges in implementing commitments with regard to women and peace and security. She reaffirmed the Mission's commitment to advancing the women and peace and security agenda in collaboration with the Congolese partners and the country team.

Members asked questions related to women's low representation on candidates lists for the December 2018 elections, the continuing threats to and shrinking space for civil society organizations and human rights defenders, and the accountability of perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence, including through the sanctions regime. They also inquired about ongoing efforts to increase the gender-responsiveness of MONUSCO and sought input on key messages and concerns ahead of the visit by the Security Council to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in October 2018. Below are the main points raised in response to those questions.

- The participation and representation of women in government and decision-making bodies remains a challenge. Although half of all registered voters for the general elections in December 2018 are women, there is only one female presidential candidate and only approximately 12 per cent of candidates on national and provincial lists are women. These percentages are the same as in previous elections, but the lack of progress is discouraging to many Congolese women who are active in public life. The electoral law does not include quotas for women's representation, and women are often marginalized in political parties and are less likely to secure political and financial sponsors.

- In the absence of a quota, the United Nations advocated the inclusion of a voluntary commitment from parties in the code of conduct issued by the Independent National Electoral Commission. Nearly half of the political parties have signed this code of conduct, stressing their will to include women on their electoral lists, but this does not include the major parties.

- In the lead-up to the general elections in December 2018, the Mission and country team are prioritizing support for women candidates and voters. This includes plans for women's situation rooms that would be aimed at building the capacity of analysts to monitor the elections and of journalists to cover them with a gender perspective and in a non-discriminatory manner. The United Nations is already making preparations to increase women's participation in the next election cycle.

- Women continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict, for example through forced displacement, the loss of both livelihoods and male

family members and by their increased responsibilities in caring for victims of armed conflict. This has recently been compounded by women's exposure to Ebola, given their primary role as caregivers. Two thirds of those who have contracted Ebola in North Kivu are women.

- The number of conflict-related sexual violence cases in 2018 has increased compared with 2017. Conflict-related sexual violence is predominantly perpetrated by armed groups, militias and the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to a lesser extent the national police.

- The Mission is supporting discussions between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) and has made it clear that they can support demobilization only if there is a commitment to ending sexual violence and no amnesty for perpetrators of sexual violence. MONUSCO also supported eight trials by mobile courts, involving 65 victims and resulting in 59 convictions against perpetrators of sexual violence, and has also increased the involvement of women in local protection mechanisms, including community alert networks. In some areas, 60 per cent of accurate alerts come from women. Gender advisers are also working with community liaison assistants and local communities to identify zones of high threat for women and girls. The inclusion of gender in risk mapping has increased the effectiveness and relevance of United Nations patrols for women and girls. Women affected by conflict or in remote communities are more likely to engage with United Nations patrols if women are part of the patrols.

- The inclusion of sexual and gender-based violence within the designation criteria in the sanctions regime has increased pressure on the Government to address sexual and gender-based violence.

- MONUSCO has continued to use gender markers to measure its gender-responsiveness and coordinates with gender focal points in 25 different offices of the Mission. The Mission aims to reach the target of having 34 per cent women among its international staff by the end of 2018 (currently 29 per cent). However, progress is slow and women are a minority on rosters of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and downsizing missions, from which MONUSCO hires most of its civilian personnel. With regard to the uniformed military component of the Mission, only 3.5 per cent are women.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, presented some of the recommendations highlighted in the background brief shared with the participants, and those were complemented by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The recommendations included:

- Encouraging the Security Council to meet with women's organizations from the capital and conflict-affected provinces during its visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to stress that peaceful and inclusive elections are in the interests of all, and to explore opportunities and obstacles to women's participation in governance and political processes, including support for women candidates on the current electoral lists.

- Supporting regional women's networks, such as the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Regional Women's Forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) and the African Women Leaders Network, to support organizations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo working on issues relating to women and peace and security,

including women's political participation and the implementation of the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

- Calling upon the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to reinforce efforts to address conflict-related sexual violence, including by providing sufficient support for the implementation of action plans based on the 2013 joint communiqué between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, by continuing to fight against impunity and by scaling up services for survivors. In this regard, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict noted that the sharp increase in conflict-related sexual violence was evident in both scale and the geographic spread of crimes and had resulted in new entities listed in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250). Of the cases verified in the first half of 2018, 30 per cent were perpetrated by members of the security sector and 70 per cent by non-State actors. The Security Council can help to fight against impunity, including by stripping those prosecuted for sexual and gender-based violence of their political legitimacy. The Council's upcoming visit is an opportunity to insist that perpetrators be forbidden from holding elective and appointed offices.

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting, thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, MONUSCO and the country team for their participation, and committed to following up on the recommendations.

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Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2409 (2018), in which the Council requested me to report on the implementation of the commitments made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It provides an overview of peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region since the issuance of my previous report (S/2018/209) and covers the period from 1 March to 31 August 2018.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. During the reporting period, the security situation in the Great Lakes region was marked by unresolved conflicts in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan; persistent activities by illegal armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and reports of security-related incidents in some border areas. The presence and activities of foreign armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained a major challenge to security and continued to affect the building of trust and cooperation among countries of the region.

3. A positive development during the period was cooperation among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda towards the repatriation of disarmed combatants of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and their dependants, as well as former combatants of the Mouvement du 23 mars

[1] In this context, the region includes the 13 signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations.

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(M23), following the launch of the follow-up mechanism for their repatriation, in April 2018.

4. There was also progress in the relocation of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) accommodated on premises of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As of August 2018, 576 SPLM/A-IO elements, out of an initial total of 627, had relocated to third countries as a result of joint efforts by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO.

5. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the security situation continued to deteriorate in the eastern provinces. Some local armed groups, including the Mouvement national pour le renouveau, operating in North Kivu, and the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo, led by Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba, operating in parts of South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces, strengthened their anti-government postures.

6. While no military confrontation involving the former M23 members was recorded during the reporting period, in a communiqué issued on 13 August, the group declared that its elements had been present on Congolese territory since January 2018. The communiqué stated that the group did not intend to engage in war and, instead, meant to promote a free and credible electoral process in the country.

7. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remained active in North Kivu Province and reportedly continued to recruit followers from neighbouring countries. Recent operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against the group reportedly resulted in a split within ADF, which, thereafter, appeared to be operating in small, largely independent groups. Alleged ADF attacks targeted Congolese security forces and the civilian population, as well as MONUSCO forces. Since the beginning of 2018, more than 100 civilians have been killed in ADF attacks. The most severe incident during the reporting period was the killing of 14 farmers on 2 August, on the outskirts of Beni, North Kivu Province.

8. The reporting period witnessed continuing weakening of FDLR, due to reported internal divisions as well as some progress towards the repatriation of disarmed former FDLR combatants and dependants to Rwanda. This notwithstanding, FDLR remained active and allegedly recruited from within the Hutu-dominated Nyatura armed groups and in Virunga National Park, in North Kivu Province. Furthermore, FDLR reportedly provided logistical support to local armed groups, particularly Nyatura.

9. The security situation in Burundi remained calm yet unpredictable. On 11 and 12 May, unidentified armed elements staged an attack on a village in Cibitoke, near the border between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, killing at least 26 civilians. Burundian authorities claimed that the attack had been carried out by Burundian armed groups operating from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and requested the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to investigate the incident.

10. Cross-border security-related incidents continued along the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, on the one hand, and between Burundi and Rwanda, on the other. On 5 July 2018, four Ugandan soldiers and three civilians were killed in clashes between the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda on Lake Edward. Congolese authorities requested the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism to investigate the incident, which, they claimed, had been triggered when Ugandan troops had entered Congolese territory. During the same period, Uganda expressed concern regarding the presence, near its

border, of armed elements believed to belong to the Front de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri militia.

11. Following unconfirmed reports of activities by armed groups in Rwandan territory near the border with Burundi, the Burundian armed forces released a statement on 10 July, noting that they had not found any evidence of Rwandan opposition groups operating from Burundian territory.

12. The continued presence of South Sudanese refugees and internally displaced persons along the Congolese border with South Sudan continued to present a security challenge as members of the warring South Sudanese factions were reported to mingle with the refugee population. A similar context prevailed along the border between the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where elements of Central African armed groups allegedly entered the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent months.

13. In the Central African Republic, armed groups continued to occupy parts of the territory. Particularly in the east, militias maintained control of several areas of economic significance and continued to carry out deadly attacks, including against forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

B. Political developments

14. Some countries in the region, notably Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continued to face political uncertainty and instability despite ongoing political and dialogue processes.

15. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite steady progress in the implementation of the electoral calendar, tensions persisted over the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 and modalities for conducting the elections scheduled for 23 December 2018. The decision by the President, Joseph Kabila, to respect the constitutional two-term limit and not seek a third term was welcomed by the opposition as well as regional and international partners, and contributed to the lowering of tensions.

16. The period for the registration of candidates for the presidential election ended on 8 August. Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary was designated as a candidate by the Front commun pour le Congo, led by President Kabila. On 25 August, six candidates who had registered for the presidential election were declared ineligible by the Independent National Electoral Commission, including Jean-Pierre Bemba, who had returned to Kinshasa on 1 August, following his acquittal on 7 June by the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court of convictions for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Moïse Katumbi, former Governor of the former province of Katanga and leader of the platform Ensemble pour le changement, who had been in exile in Belgium, was unable to register as a candidate.

17. With regard to opening up political space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, government officials maintained that the confidence-building measures envisaged in the 31 December 2016 political agreement had been implemented, including the release, in July, of several political prisoners. According to the Government, opposition and civil society figures who remained in detention were undergoing judicial proceedings on charges related to criminal activities. For their part, opposition groups alleged that the continuing detention of political figures was in breach of the 31 December 2016 agreement. While some political opposition groups were authorized to hold public gatherings, the ban on demonstrations and

political assemblies was not formally lifted, and activities by political parties, civil society organisations and journalists remained restricted.

18. In addition, opposition parties continued to raise concerns about the planned use of voting machines, as well as irregularities in the voter registry, which had been highlighted in an audit conducted by the International Organization of la Francophonie. The opposition demanded that the National Independent Electoral Commission address those concerns to enhance confidence in the voting process.

19. Regional and international diplomatic efforts to improve the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued during the reporting period, pursuant to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

20. On 24 April, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held its Double Troika Summit in Luanda. President Kabila attended the Summit, at which Congolese political actors were urged to stay committed to the implementation of the electoral calendar and support for the electoral process and the strengthening of peace, security and political stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were reaffirmed.

21. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was discussed by the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, during the visits to Paris by the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, on 23 May and by the President of Angola, João Lourenço, on 28 May. On 2 August, President Kabila met with President Lourenço in Luanda. The two leaders underscored the good relations between their States, noted progress in implementing the electoral calendar and reaffirmed the centrality of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in promoting peace in the region.

22. On 10 August, the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, visited Kinshasa. In a communiqué released after his meeting with President Kabila, the two leaders took note of progress in the electoral process.

23. On 14 August, President Lourenço hosted a summit of regional leaders to discuss, among other things, developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The event was attended by the President of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba, and the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, as well as representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the African Union Commission. Discussion on the Democratic Republic of the Congo built on two tripartite meetings among President Sassou Nguesso, President Lourenço and President Kabila in late 2017 and early 2018, respectively. In their final communiqué, the leaders reaffirmed their readiness to support the Congolese people. They expressed concern over continued activities by negative forces, including ADF and FDLR, in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and called for regional action against those armed groups.

24. At the thirty-eighth ordinary summit of SADC, held in Windhoek on 17 and 18 August, the leaders praised President Joseph Kabila for not seeking re-election and noted that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would continue to provide funding and logistics to enable the conduct of peaceful and credible elections.

25. In Burundi, tensions between the Government and the opposition persisted. Constitutional changes that had been endorsed by referendum on 17 May were rejected by opposition parties, on the grounds that the referendum had been inherently flawed and the changes adopted undermined the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (2000). Burundian opposition groups have long complained of a lack of political space, and the circumstances surrounding the adoption of the new Constitution did little to defuse political tensions. The announcement on 7 June

by the President, Pierre Nkurunziza, that he would not seek re-election in 2020 was welcomed in the region and internationally.

26. Meanwhile, efforts by the region and the international community through the inter-Burundian dialogue, led by the East African Community, achieved limited progress in promoting inclusive political dialogue. In August, the Government of Burundi confirmed its planned participation in the fifth session of the dialogue, scheduled for October 2018.

27. Renewed and enhanced efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) resulted in significant progress in the peace process in South Sudan. Talks between the negotiating parties were facilitated by the Sudan, with support from Uganda, and built on previous efforts led by Ethiopia. After the signing on 27 June of a permanent ceasefire, followed on 5 August by an agreement on the formation of a transitional government of national unity, to be led by the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, with SPLM/A-IO leader Riek Machar as his First Vice-President, the parties initialled a draft revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan on 30 August. The opposition, however, raised reservations, including regarding the number of states, the demarcation of tribal and state boundaries and the quorum for meetings of Parliament and the Council of Ministers. They requested the Heads of State and Government of IGAD to help resolve outstanding issues.

28. In the Central African Republic, the Government continued to make progress towards the restoration of State authority, although challenged by insecurity caused by the continuing activities of armed groups. The panel of facilitators of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation concluded its second round of consultations with the 14 recognized armed groups in April. Despite the efforts of the African Union-led panel, supported by the United Nations, the Economic Community of Central African States and other regional partners, this engagement has yet to translate into measurable reduction in violence in the country.

C. Humanitarian situation

29. Political tensions and conflict in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan remained key drivers of humanitarian crises and needs in the Great Lakes region. Approximately 7.3 million people are currently uprooted in the region, of whom some 4.7 million are internally displaced and nearly 2.6 million are refugees and asylum seekers. Forced displacement is a key source and consequence of instability and mistrust in the region, particularly in cases of protracted displacement, in which refugees are often perceived by armed militias as being prime subjects for recruitment.

30. Since the beginning of 2018, some 90,000 new Congolese refugees have arrived in Uganda, with growing numbers in the United Republic of Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. There are currently more than 780,000 Congolese refugees and asylum seekers in the Great Lakes region.

31. A total of 388,400 Burundian refugees are hosted in the United Republic of Tanzania (237,716), Rwanda (68,417), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (46,500) and Uganda (40,765). An estimated 178,000 Burundians are internally displaced. The return process that commenced following the resumption of the tripartite agreement among Burundi, the United Republic of Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in September 2017 is expected to continue. During the reporting period, there was growing pressure to close the refugee camps along the border between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, and for all Burundian refugees to return home before the end of 2019.

This raised a serious protection concern regarding those refugees who may be forced to return as the deadline approaches.

32. Some 10.9 million people were categorized as severely food-insecure across the Great Lakes region during the reporting period. The region also battled outbreaks of communicable diseases, including Ebola and cholera.

33. Despite rising needs, humanitarian responses in the Great Lakes region remained underfunded. As of August, funding levels for humanitarian response plans for countries in the region were as follows: Burundi, 26 per cent; the Central African Republic, 29 per cent; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 24 per cent; and South Sudan, 44 per cent. In addition, the Regional Refugee Response Plans for Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan remained underfunded.

D. Human rights

34. Human rights trends in the Great Lakes region were marked by continuing violations of and restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms, in a context of shrinking political space, as well as by the growing vulnerability of some groups, notably internally displaced persons and refugees.

35. In countries affected by conflict and instability, as highlighted at the thirty-eighth session of the Human Rights Council, held from 18 June to 6 July, attacks on civilian populations by both armed groups and State security forces continued. While the region registered progress in the implementation of its commitments to fighting impunity and strengthening the rule of law through the operationalization of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, accountability for serious human rights violations and respect for the rule of law remained weak. Attacks against international actors, including the United Nations, also continued.

36. In both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, limited progress was recorded in the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. In Burundi, opposition and civil society groups, as well as human rights advocates, frequently complained during the reporting period that some of those jailed in the context of the protests of 2015 remained in prison, even after having served their sentences or having received a presidential pardon. Both domestic and international media organizations were closely monitored by the Burundian authorities and censored or suspended if deemed unfavourable to the Government, especially in the run-up to the constitutional referendum held in May. Moreover, restricted access was granted to United Nations human rights mechanisms, notably the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and the group of independent experts, whose members had their visas withdrawn in April 2018, shortly after arriving in the country.

37. In its update to the Human Rights Council on 27 June 2018, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi reported continued human rights violations in the country, including extrajudicial killings, abductions and enforced disappearances, many of which were attributed to the armed youth wing of the ruling party, known as Imbonerakure. On 5 September, the Commission of Inquiry highlighted in its report that crimes against humanity had been committed in the country in 2017 and 2018. The Government of Burundi severely criticized the report as misleading.

38. In South Sudan, in a report released in July, United Nations investigators confirmed that between 16 April and 24 May, at least 232 civilians had been killed, and many more injured, in attacks by government and allied forces. They recommended expediting the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan to ensure accountability.

39. In the Central African Republic, regulations providing for the prosecution by the Special Criminal Court of serious crimes committed since 2003, including outside the Central African Republic, were adopted by Parliament in May 2018 and validated by the Constitutional Court.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

40. My Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region continued to engage the leaders of the region, the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and other regional and international partners to advance the implementation of national, regional and international commitments under the Framework as well as the decisions adopted at the eighth high-level meeting of its Regional Oversight Mechanism.

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

41. My third quarterly report of 2018 on MONUSCO pursuant to resolution 2409 (2018) (S/2018/655) contains further information on the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

B. Commitments of the region

42. The reporting period saw good progress in the implementation of regional commitments pertaining to enhanced cooperation on security, political and economic matters, as well as the fight against impunity through judicial cooperation.

43. Progress related to the commitment to addressing the security concerns of Member States was achieved through the repatriation of former FDLR combatants and their dependants, as well as former M23 members, in the context of the follow-up mechanism established for that purpose.

44. The United Nations remained engaged with SADC, pursuant to the decision made at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism related to the strengthening of the Intervention Brigade of MONUSCO. In that context, a joint task force of the United Nations and SADC conducted an assessment in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 28 April to 4 May to identify and address requirements to enhance the effectiveness of the Brigade.

45. In May, representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda met in Kasese, Uganda, to review the security situation in the border area. In a separate development, the Joint Permanent Commission of the two countries met from 21 to 23 August to discuss security, political and economic cooperation between them. Rwanda hosted a tripartite meeting of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration, with the participation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, which resulted in joint recommendations to enhance community conservation and law enforcement in the area.

46. Regional leaders and organizations pursued efforts to address instability in the region, notably by promoting a peaceful political transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and advocating a peaceful resolution of the political crisis in Burundi.

47. In that context, the Regional Interministerial Committee, comprising the ministers for foreign affairs of the States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, met in Brazzaville on 21 July. Participants discussed the

situations in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, and called upon the Troika of the Conference to undertake diplomatic efforts aimed at normalizing relations between Burundi and Rwanda.

48. On 7 June, on the occasion of the eighth African Border Day, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda physically marked their boundary adjacent to Rubavu, Rwanda, and Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, as part of the demarcation efforts conducted under the African Union Border Programme.

49. Progress was also achieved in operationalizing the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, established in 2016 as a testament to the commitment by the countries of the region to combating impunity, in line with the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region. During the reporting period, designated senior public prosecutors began to address cases involving cross-border crimes that require enhanced regional judicial cooperation.

50. On 26 June, Kenya hosted the fourteenth summit on the northern corridor integration projects, attended by Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. Participating leaders reaffirmed their commitment to advancing regional integration and underscored the importance of accelerating socioeconomic transformation, industrialization and employment creation. The summit also saw the adoption of the Accession Treaty to the Mutual Defence Pact.

C. Commitments of the international community

51. The international community maintained a strong focus on the situation in the Great Lakes region, notably through the activities of special envoys and special representatives for the region and those of the International Contact Group on the Great Lakes region, as well as through bilateral engagements.

52. International partners continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, including through cross-border interventions intended to address the root causes of instability in the region, in the context of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework. However, funding for the Regional Strategic Framework remained low. Out of the estimated $100 million required for the five target countries, only $3.9 million has been received so far. That amount comprises $2 million from the Peacebuilding Fund and $1.9 million from the European Union. My Special Envoy remained in contact with the European Union to discuss additional funding. He also continued to collaborate with relevant United Nations resident coordinators and regional directors of agencies, funds and programmes to reinforce joint fundraising and cross-border project implementation.

IV. Implementation of the road map of my Special Envoy

53. My Special Envoy continued his good offices to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. To that end, he engaged with a broad range of actors, including national leaders, government officials, parliamentarians and representatives of political parties, women's groups, civil society organizations and regional organizations.

54. Throughout those engagements, my Special Envoy reaffirmed the United Nations commitment to advancing peace and security in the region and advocated credible, inclusive and peaceful elections and dialogue processes, as well as sustainable political solutions. He also underlined the need to make progress in neutralizing negative forces and repatriating former combatants, as well as addressing

the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources and their linkages to the activities of armed groups.

55. In addition, my Special Envoy urged the leaders in the region to identify and provide durable solutions for displaced populations and to ensure that impunity is addressed, so that perpetrators of serious crimes are promptly brought to justice. He also advocated greater participation by women in peace and political processes and for the needs of women and girls to be considered during the repatriation of former combatants and their dependants.

A. Good offices of my Special Envoy

Promoting cooperation and confidence-building in the region

56. Recognizing the importance of regional leadership and ownership of the peace and security agenda in the region, my Special Envoy continued to support the efforts of President Sassou Nguesso of the Congo, in his capacity as Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism, as well as those of President Lourenço of Angola, in his capacity as Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. He also worked closely with the African Union and the executive secretariat of the Conference to tackle peace and security challenges in the region and strengthen cooperation with those entities.

57. Further to the outcome of the high-level workshop convened by the Office of my Special Envoy and the African Union Commission to mark the fifth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Addis Ababa on 26 and 27 February 2018, my Special Envoy encouraged frank dialogue between leaders to resolve their differences and address any issue that could jeopardize good relations and weaken the bonds of friendship and solidarity between neighbours. During meetings with President Sassou Nguesso held in Brazzaville on 29 March and 20 July, my Special Envoy encouraged the President to take initiatives to build trust and deepen cooperation between countries affected by the activities of negative forces. The need for such initiatives was also discussed at the fifth ministerial meeting of the guarantors of the Framework, held in Brazzaville on 20 July.

58. Furthermore, as part of the preparations for the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, scheduled to be held in Uganda on 8 October 2018, my Special Envoy met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, Samuel Kutesa, in Kampala on 2 August. The two agreed that the Mechanism should seize the opportunity of this meeting to discuss ways to resolve differences and build trust and cooperation among its members.

Negative forces

59. In all his engagements, including at the fifth ministerial meeting of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, my Special Envoy expressed concern about the persistent activities of negative forces in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and advocated renewed regional collaboration to tackle instability and insecurity in the region.

60. Pursuant to the decision made at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, my Special Envoy and the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region, in close cooperation with MONUSCO, launched the follow-up mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed combatants, in Goma on 24 April. The mechanism comprises representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Following the launch, my Special Envoy and

his Office helped to organize the first assessment mission by the follow-up mechanism, which visited camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, hosting disarmed FDLR combatants and their dependants, as well as in Rwanda and Uganda, hosting disarmed former M23 combatants. During the second meeting of the mechanism, held in Nairobi on 25 June, participants adopted a road map to expedite the repatriation of former combatants. This helped to accelerate sensitization and repatriation efforts in July and August.

61. Efforts by the mechanism resulted in the repatriation of an initial group of 13 former M23 members from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and of 3 former FDLR combatants and 19 of their dependants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Rwanda, while outreach continues to encourage others to follow suit. Furthermore, the activities of the follow-up mechanism contributed to the strengthening of cooperation among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda with regard to the protracted issue of repatriation, which has long been a source of tension and suspicion among the three countries.

Support for dialogue and political processes in the region

Democratic Republic of the Congo

62. My Special Envoy visited Kinshasa from 3 to 7 June to engage, together with my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, senior government officials and opposition stakeholders, as well as representatives of the international community based in the capital. His consultations confirmed concerns shared by the opposition and some members of the international community regarding continuing restrictions on political freedoms and what the opposition denounced as lack of implementation of key confidence-building measures set out in the 31 December 2016 political agreement. My Special Envoy urged all stakeholders to help create an environment conducive to the holding of credible elections, in full compliance with the agreement. In his interactions with the Government and the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission, he highlighted the need to address the concerns of the opposition over voting modalities and advocated broad outreach by the Commission to build confidence in the electoral process.

63. My Special Envoy also held consultations with senior government officials in the region, as well as with senior representatives of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the European Union. In addition to his meetings with President Sassou Nguesso, discussed in paragraph 57 above, my Special Envoy met with President Lourenço of Angola on 9 March and with the President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, on 30 April to seek their continued support for political and dialogue processes in the region. He had frequent contacts with senior officials of the African Union and met with the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, on 22 June to examine the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other issues of common interest.

Burundi

64. In order to improve the coordination of United Nations support for the political process in Burundi, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region hosted an informal meeting with my Special Envoy for Burundi, Michel Kafando, and my Special Representative for Central Africa, François Fall. They agreed to continue to closely coordinate their efforts, in cooperation with the African Union, to support the inter-Burundian dialogue in order to preserve the gains of the Arusha Agreement.

Advancing women and peace and security

65. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy continued to promote the role of women in peace and political processes in the Great Lakes region.

66. At his initiative, following consultations with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), missions were deployed to countries affected by conflicts in the region. The objective of the missions was to highlight the concerns of women and promote their participation in decision-making as well as in peace and political processes in the region.

67. In that regard, on 3 and 4 July 2018 my Special Envoy participated in a joint African Union-United Nations visit to South Sudan led by my Deputy, Amina J. Mohammed, and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop. Furthermore, from 9 to 19 August the Office of my Special Envoy facilitated "solidarity missions" to Burundi, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The delegations were led by women leaders representing the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) and the Regional Women's Forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region: Catherine Samba-Panza, former President of the Central African Republic; Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, former Vice-President of Uganda; Liberata Mulamula, former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; and Attiat Mustafa Abdelhalim Ahmed, Chair of the Regional Women's Forum.

68. In Burundi, the delegation met with President Nkurunziza, the First Lady, government officials, political parties, representatives of women's organizations of women, and other national and international stakeholders. Discussions were centred on the need for space for inclusive political dialogue and participation by women.

69. In the Central African Republic, the delegation met with the President, Faustin Archange Touadera, the Prime Minister, representatives of Parliament, the Constitutional Court, the Roman Catholic Church and the Islamic community, political parties, women's representatives and other national and international stakeholders. The mission welcomed the commitment by the President to promote greater participation by women in political and public life and in the African Union-led peace initiative in the country.

70. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the delegation met with the President of the National Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Interior and Security, the Minister of Gender, Family and Children's Affairs and the Minister of Justice, as well as representatives of the Independent National Electoral Commission, civil society and women's associations. The mission identified sociological, cultural, legal and financial barriers to women's participation in the ongoing political and electoral processes and called for legal reforms to address discriminatory measures against women and minorities.

71. The outcomes of the missions will be presented to the Heads of State and Government of the region at the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

72. Furthermore, the Office of my Special Envoy facilitated the participation of the Regional Women's Forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in the field visits to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda

and Uganda, conducted by the follow-up mechanism for the repatriation of former combatants, to ensure that the needs of women and girls are addressed in the sensitization and voluntary repatriation process.

Displacement

73. Further to the outcome of the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, and in preparation for a high-level meeting on displacement, to be organized jointly with the executive secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, my Special Envoy undertook a series of consultations with regional and international partners, which confirmed the urgency of addressing the issue of displacement. Building on those consultations, on 28 May my Special Envoy met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, to discuss collaboration between his Office and UNHCR to promote durable solutions for persons displaced by conflict in the Great Lakes region. My Special Envoy relayed the view, shared by representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, that the protracted presence of refugees in the region constituted a source of tension and mistrust between neighbours, and that stabilization efforts in other areas, including through the neutralization of negative forces, were unlikely to produce results unless the displacement situation was addressed.

74. Following the agreement, the Office of my Special Envoy continued to work with signatory countries, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, United Nations partners, the World Bank and civil society groups towards organizing the aforementioned high-level meeting on displacement.

Judicial cooperation

75. On 13 and 14 June, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, organized the second meeting of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, in Dar es-Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania. Senior public prosecutors from the region committed to advancing regional, cross-border cooperation and began to discuss specific cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes related to the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources.

Management of natural resources

76. My Special Envoy and his Office encouraged regional efforts to reduce the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources, particularly gold, which finance and incentivize the activities of illegal armed groups and criminal networks and contribute to mistrust and mutual accusations among the signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 17 April, my Special Envoy addressed the opening of the twelfth Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held in Paris. He called for joint actions by international partners and countries in the region to deprive negative forces of illicit revenues.

Economic cooperation

77. Following the first Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, held in Kinshasa in February 2016, the Office of my Special Envoy continued planning for the second Conference, to be held in Rubavu, Rwanda, in 2019, in close collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

78. The Office of my Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region also convened a meeting of the interim board of the Great Lakes Private

Sector Forum in Nairobi on 21 and 22 June, with the participation of the heads of the chambers of commerce and investment promotion agencies of the five target countries in the region, as well as representatives of Kenya and the East African Community. The meeting approved the road map for organizing the second Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, which includes convening a general assembly of the Forum later in 2018.

B. Oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

79. The Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remained actively engaged in monitoring progress in the implementation of the decisions made at the eighth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. Discussions at the 21st and 22nd meetings of the Committee, held in Nairobi on 26 and 27 June and 6 and 7 September, respectively, were centred on progress and challenges in the neutralization of negative forces, notably the strengthening of the Intervention Brigade of MONUSCO and the launch of the follow-up mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed combatants. The Committee also discussed developments in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. It encouraged the continued engagement of the guarantors of the Framework in efforts to strengthen trust and cooperation between countries in the region. The meeting also resulted in recommendations related to other regional commitments, notably addressing displacement, enhancing judicial cooperation and natural resource management and advancing women, peace and security in the region.

80. Representatives of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework met at the ministerial level in Brazzaville on 20 July. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Congo, Jean-Claude Gakosso, representing the Chair of both the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism. It was attended by the Minister for External Relations of Angola, Manuel Augusto, representing the Chair of the SADC Organ for Politics, Defence and Security, and by senior representatives of the United Nations and the African Union.

81. The meeting participants encouraged enhanced cooperation between the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Intervention Brigade to maximize military pressure on negative forces; requested the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to continue to cooperate in the context of the follow-up mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed combatants; and agreed that renewed effort was required to neutralize negative forces. They also underscored the need to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the countries of the region, notably through regular exchanges at the leadership level.

C. Partnerships with regional organizations, Governments and other United Nations entities

82. My Special Envoy continued his efforts to strengthen partnerships with regional organizations, bilateral partners and United Nations offices in the region.

Regional organizations

83. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy engaged regularly with the African Union, including with the Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, as well as with the Executive Secretary of

the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Those efforts helped to align the views of the United Nations and the African Union on how best to tackle peace and security challenges in the region. Furthermore, they were instrumental in fostering greater coherence and synergy among regional and international partners in supporting the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

84. My Special Envoy also continued to strengthen the partnership between his Office and the executive secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Close collaboration continued, notably with regard to judicial cooperation; women and peace and security; the repatriation of former combatants; economic integration; population displacement; and the Conference's Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. The Political Director in the Office of my Special Envoy visited Bujumbura on 27 and 28 August to strengthen and coordinate joint actions between the two offices.

International partners

85. In addition to attending consultations organized by the International Contact Group and engaging regularly with other special envoys and special representatives for the Great Lakes region, on 7 May my Special Envoy convened a meeting in Nairobi that brought together representatives of Member States and organizations supporting the Trust Fund for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union. They all reaffirmed their strong commitment to supporting the implementation of the Framework and the work of my Special Envoy.

86. Following previous discussions with representatives of the World Bank, which had included an agreement to enhance coordination and cooperation in the Great Lakes region, my Special Envoy met with the Country and Regional Director of the World Bank, Jean-Christophe Carret, in Kinshasa on 5 June. The two agreed to jointly convene a regional meeting to review cooperation between their offices.

Cooperation with other United Nations entities

87. My Special Envoy has regular contacts and held dedicated meetings with other senior United Nations officials in the region, notably my Special Envoy Michel Kafando and my Special Representative for Central Africa, François Fall, as indicated above.

88. On 1 July in Nairobi, my Special Envoy convened the fifth semi-annual political coordination meeting, bringing together the United Nations resident coordinators in the core countries of the Great Lakes region, namely, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as representatives of MONUSCO, the Office of my Special Envoy Michel Kafando and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). That initiative contributed to a shared assessment of progress and challenges in the region and led to an agreement to strengthen cooperation in support of harmonized political and programmatic engagements at the national and regional levels.

89. My Special Envoy, in collaboration with the Chair of the regional team of the United Nations Development Group, also continued to promote and guide United Nations efforts to operationalize the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework. In addition to leading resource mobilization efforts, my Special Envoy convened a session, on the margins of the political coordination meeting, to review the status of implementation of the Regional Strategic Framework.

90. On 26 and 27 April, the Office of my Special Envoy attended a meeting that brought together United Nations presences in Central Africa, convened by UNOCA in Libreville. My Special Envoy also attended the 46th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Brazzaville on 1 June.

V. Observations and recommendations

91. I note with concern that the Great Lakes region continues to face significant political and security challenges, despite encouraging political developments of late, as highlighted in the present report. Greater political will and cooperation among the signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework are necessary to advance the implementation of the Framework. Notwithstanding the progress achieved since the Framework came into effect in February 2013, the root causes of instability have not been fully addressed and continue to plague the region. That situation slows socioeconomic progress and development, in addition to causing great suffering for populations across the region. I urge the leaders of the region to seize the opportunity of the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism to make concrete decisions to strengthen cooperation between their respective Governments.

92. I am worried about the ongoing activities by armed groups that continue to fuel insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On the basis of ongoing consultations between the United Nations and SADC, and in line with decisions made by the Regional Oversight Mechanism, the United Nations will pursue its efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Intervention Brigade. I urge all countries signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to join forces to stop the activities of armed groups, pursuant to their commitments under the Framework and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development, and in conformity with the decision by the African Union to silence the guns by 2020.

93. I welcome the reactivation of the follow-up mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed combatants, which has created a positive dynamic of cooperation among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. I encourage those countries, with support from the United Nations, the African Union and the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to continue in this spirit to finally resolve this long-standing issue.

94. I welcome the progress made in the preparations for elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I note, however, that sources of tension, including disagreements between political actors and violations of human rights, have continued to limit broad and genuine political participation. I urge all stakeholders to work together to create conditions conducive to peaceful, credible and inclusive elections, notably through the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement.

95. In Burundi, the United Nations will continue to support the East African Community in its effort to advance the inter-Burundian dialogue and to make it more inclusive.

96. I welcome the commitment by the Governments in the region to strengthening cooperation in judicial matters. I encourage them to make the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network operational and to use it to fight impunity, promote justice and build trust among leaders and ordinary people in the region.

97. I remain deeply troubled by the humanitarian situation in the region. I encourage the Office of my Special Envoy and the executive secretariat of the International

Conference on the Great Lakes Region to pursue preparations for the planned high-level meeting on population displacement in coordination with relevant United Nations entities. I urge the countries concerned to come together to find durable solutions for displaced populations, and I encourage them to work with the United Nations and the Conference to that end.

98. I welcome the solidarity missions to Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, conducted by senior officials of the United Nations, FemWise-Africa and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as an important initiative to promote the inclusion of women in all aspects of political and economic life. I encourage the Office of my Special Envoy to continue collaborating with relevant countries and organizations to ensure full participation by women in political and public spheres across the region.

99. The importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts in the Great Lakes region cannot be overstated. I call upon the international community to support the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

100. I wish to thank my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and his team. I appreciate the valuable work done in the Great Lakes region by regional organizations, particularly the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC. I also thank the East African Community for steering the inter-Burundian dialogue. Lastly, I commend the Governments of the region for their bilateral and multilateral efforts, and the international community for its support for the pursuit of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

United Nations S/2018/887

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 October 2018

Original: English

Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 2240 (2015), 2312 (2016) and 2380 (2017) and its Presidential Statement of 16 December 2015 (S/PRST/2015/25),

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Libya,

Welcoming the Secretary-General's report of 31 August 2018 (S/2018/807),

Mindful of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming the necessity to put an end to the ongoing proliferation of, and endangerment of lives by, the smuggling of migrants and trafficking of persons in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya, and, for these specific purposes, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,

1. Condemns all acts of migrant smuggling and human trafficking into, through and from the Libyan territory and off the coast of Libya, which undermine further the process of stabilization of Libya and endanger the lives of hundreds of thousands of people;

2. Decides, for a further period of twelve months from the date of adoption of this resolution, to renew the authorisations as set out in paragraphs 7, 8, 9 and 10 of resolution 2240 (2015),reaffirms paragraph 11 thereof and otherwise reiterates its resolutions 2240 (2015), 2312 (2106) and 2380 (2017) and its Presidential Statement S/PRST/2015/25;

3. Renews the reporting requests set out in paragraphs 17 and 18 of resolution 2240 (2015) from the date of adoption of this resolution;

4. Expresses its intention to continue to review the situation and consider, as appropriate, renewing the authority provided in this resolution for additional periods;

5. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

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United Nations S/2018/888

Security Council

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5 October 2018

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Letter dated 5 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing with regard to the letter dated 3 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/891), which irresponsibly accused the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of promoting and financing extremist groups in the region and blamed the Kingdom for the attack that occurred on the Ahvaz military parade on 21 September 2018.

The Government of Saudi Arabia strongly condemns and categorically rejects this anticipated offensive accusation by the Iranian regime, as a part of many other hostile statements made by this regime to merely cover for its aggressive and devastating policies in the region and throughout the world. The Iranian regime has in the past accused the Kingdom of being behind the collapse of the Iranian economy, choosing to blame the Kingdom instead of changing its heinous behaviour that resulted in wasting the country's income by supporting and financing terrorist acts instead of developing the nation's infrastructure and the well-being of its own citizens.

The Kingdom policy is clear about non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and its comprehensive rejection of any interference in its internal affairs.

The substantiated evidence in regard to the support and financing of the terrorist groups in the world by the Iranian regime is obvious and does not require any further investigation. Iran's supply of ballistic missiles to the Houthi armed group in Yemen is widely evident and continues to pose serious regional and global threats. Iranian interference is destabilizing the region through its arm, the terrorist group Hizbullah in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. I also would like to remind you of numerous terrorist acts committed in Saudi Arabia, including the Khobar Towers bombings in June 1996 and the explosion of Sadaf Petrochemical Plant in Jubail in March 1988, all planned by Iran's arm in the region, Hizbullah.

Such an accusation by this regime is a clear diversion of attention from the deterioration of the situation of its own people, especially the population of Ahvaz. The Kingdom believes that the Iranian regime should follow a new path and act as a responsible country for the sake of its people, instead of its dangerous policies that enhance sectarianism, extremism and ethnic segregation. The continued sheltering and harbouring of the most wanted terrorist figures in the world will only keep Iran a safe haven for such acts. In this regard, I would like to refer to the twenty-second

report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities (S/2018/705), in which it is stated that "Al-Qaida leaders in the Islamic Republic of Iran have grown more prominent, working with Aiman al-Zawahiri and projecting his authority more effectively than he could previously" and "through the agency of senior Al-Qaida leadership figures based in the Islamic Republic of Iran".

We urge the Iranian regime to respect the principle of good neighbourliness, international laws and norms and common human morality in its relations with other countries.

We call upon the Council and the international community to shoulder their responsibility to halt Iran's activities led by aggressive, expansionist revolutionary ideology. We also call for an end to Iran's financing, harbouring and training of terrorist organizations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah Y. **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/889

Security Council

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3 October 2018

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Situation concerning Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2414 (2018), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until 31 October 2018 and requested me to submit a report on the situation in Western Sahara before the end of the mandate period. It covers developments that have occurred since the issuance of my previous report, of 29 March 2018 (S/2018/277), and describes the situation on the ground, the status and progress of the political negotiations on Western Sahara, the implementation of resolution 2414 (2018) and the existing challenges to the Mission's operations and steps taken to address them.

II. Recent developments

2. During the period since the issuance of my previous report, overall calm has prevailed throughout the Territory on both sides of the berm, although the previously reported underlying tensions between the parties (ibid., para. 3) continue.

3. On the political front, my Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Horst Koehler, has stepped up efforts to advance the political negotiations between the parties. Following the adoption of resolution 2414 (2018), he undertook consultations with relevant interlocutors, including Security Council members, members of the Group of Friends on Western Sahara and regional organizations. From 23 June to 1 July 2018, he carried out a second visit to the region, during which he held discussions with a wide range of high-level officials of both the parties and neighbouring States and civil society representatives. Following the visit, and in accordance with resolution 2414 (2018), he briefed the Council on 8 August and announced his intention to invite the parties and the neighbours to direct negotiations before the end of the year. Letters of invitation to an initial round-table meeting in Geneva on 5 and 6 December 2018 were subsequently sent to the parties, on 28 September.

4. Meanwhile, "police" of the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) have not been present in the buffer strip in Guerguerat (ibid.7, paras. 3–10) since 22 April 2018. The Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO, Brahim Ghali, verbally confirmed to my Personal Envoy on 26 June, during their meeting in Rabouni, Algeria, that the withdrawal was

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permanent. In view of that development, in mid-July MINURSO began to draw down its daytime monitoring post in Guerguerat. Regular aerial and ground patrols of the area are being maintained. At the same meeting in June, Mr. Ghali also pledged not to relocate any new administrative installations to Bir Lahlou or Tifariti, in keeping with resolution 2414 (2018).

5. While no major threats to the ceasefire have been recorded to date, MINURSO reported a number of new violations of military agreement No. 1. In all instances of alleged or observed violations, MINURSO engaged with the parties to prevent or resolve the violations. On a number of occasions, it was able to persuade the parties to at least partially restore the status quo ante or to abandon planned actions that could potentially violate military agreement No. 1 or create tensions.

6. Not all allegations raised by the parties were corroborated by the Mission's reconnaissance on the ground. Such instances of alleged or observed violations have occurred once a week on average since the beginning of the year, and the repeated pattern of reduced tensions following the Mission's actions provides evidence of the effectiveness of its role in preventing conflict and in maintaining an environment conducive to the work of my Personal Envoy.

7. Both Morocco and Frente POLISARIO justified some of their activities as being necessary to prevent drug trafficking and other criminal activities. Military agreement No. 1 does not address anti-smuggling or criminal prevention activities by military forces.

8. With respect to paragraph 9 of resolution 2414 (2018), in which the Security Council recognized that fundamental questions related to the ceasefire and related agreements remained and called upon the Secretary-General to interview the parties in an effort to better understand those issues, the Secretariat launched a process of engagement with the parties, seeking written responses regarding their understanding of the ceasefire and related agreements, and views on any aspects of them that might need to be adjusted. In their responses, both parties provided detailed overviews of their understanding of the current ceasefire architecture, including their views on the context and origin of the agreements. The parties shared the view that the current ceasefire architecture had played a central role in stabilizing the situation in Western Sahara. The parties also reaffirmed their commitment to the ceasefire architecture and their adherence to its terms and those of military agreement No. 1. The parties did not see a need for the adjustment of either the ceasefire architecture or military agreement No. 1. However, both parties expressed widely divergent views on their implications and application.

9. During the reporting period, insofar as MINURSO was able to observe, Morocco continued to make considerable investments in infrastructure and economic development projects west of the berm. Morocco maintains that the investments and projects benefit the people of Western Sahara and are implemented in full consultation with them. Frente POLISARIO continues to protest that the investments and development activities, as well as the exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara, are in violation of international law and of the status of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory. Frente POLISARIO also claims that all expressions of dissent, especially public pro-referendum or pro-independence demonstrations, by the Sahrawi population west of the berm are systematically and violently repressed by Moroccan security forces.

10. Frustration and anger at the lack of progress in the political process continue to prevail among the general population of the refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria, compounded by persistent difficulties, such as rising malnutrition, brought about by the steady reductions in humanitarian aid. No significant security incidents were reported in the refugee camps during the reporting period, and, unlike previously,

MINURSO received no reports of major public demonstrations against the political and military leadership.

11. In a letter dated 30 March 2018, King Mohammed VI wrote to me denouncing repeated provocations and violations of the ceasefire and related military agreements by Frente POLISARIO. In his letter, he drew particular attention to the announced intention of Frente POLISARIO to move some of its administrative structures to Bir Lahlou or Tifariti, east of the berm. He defined those intentions as acts aimed at illegally changing the status quo on the ground, which would force Morocco to unilaterally take action to preserve the status of the Territory to the east of the berm. Assurances were later given by Frente POLISARIO that no administrative structures would be moved. Additional letters were received from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations complaining about Frente POLISARIO violations east of the berm (see para. 34 below).

12. I also received a letter from the Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO claiming that, on 19 May, a Sahrawi student at Ibn Zohr University in Agadir, Morocco, had been murdered as a result of the country's policy against the Sahrawi population and that a campaign against peaceful Sahrawi demonstrators had been conducted in Laayoune and Smara during the visit by my Personal Envoy to the Territory.

III. Political activities

13. During the reporting period, my Personal Envoy continued the consultations on the issue of Western Sahara with relevant interlocutors, including members of the Security Council, members of the Group of Friends on Western Sahara and regional organizations. On 10 April, he travelled to Moscow to meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and brief them on Western Sahara. From 26 to 30 April, he travelled to Rwanda to meet with the Chairpersons of the African Union and of the African Union Commission to exchange views on recent developments in Western Sahara. In May, he travelled to Brussels and briefed the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs. In August, he met with the Deputy Secretary of State and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs of the United States of America in Washington, D.C.

14. During his second visit to the region, from 23 June to 1 July 2018, my Personal Envoy travelled to Algiers, Dakhla, Laayoune, Nouakchott, Rabat, Rabouni, Smara and Tindouf. The purpose of the visit was to gain a better understanding of the situation and to discuss with all relevant actors the way forward in the political process, following the six-month extension of the Mission's mandate in accordance with resolution 2414 (2018).

15. In Rabouni, my Personal Envoy met with Mr. Ghali as well as with the negotiation team led by Katri Idoh. Both expressed full support for my Personal Envoy and his mission as well as their serious intention to help to find a solution for Western Sahara. Mr. Ghali confirmed to my Personal Envoy, as a sign of good faith, the withdrawal of Frente POLISARIO from Guerguerat and its commitment not to return or move any institutions to Tifariti or Bir Lahlou. Mr. Ghali, however, expressed concern about the "settlement policy" and new "administrative configuration" of Morocco, which was changing the demographic composition of Western Sahara.

16. In Rabat, my Personal Envoy met with the Prime Minister of Morocco, Saad-Eddine El Othmani, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International

Cooperation, Nasser Bourita, and was assured of the full support of Morocco for his work. Mr. Bourita reiterated the call, made in resolution 2414 (2018), for a realistic, practicable and enduring political solution and stressed the commitment of Morocco to its autonomy proposal of 2007, which, in his view, should be the basis for negotiations. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister stated that, while tension in Guerguerat had significantly decreased, Morocco was still very concerned about Frente POLISARIO "provocations" east of the berm.

17. In Algiers, my Personal Envoy met with the Prime Minister of Algeria, Ahmed Ouyahia, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abdelkader Messahel. Both reiterated the country's consistent assurances of its full support as a neighbour and stressed the importance of self-determination. While insisting that it was not a party to the conflict and could not take the seat of Frente POLISARIO at the negotiating table, Mr. Messahel announced that Algeria was prepared to step up its role in the political process, as a neighbour, as required by resolution 2414 (2018).

18. In Nouakchott, the President of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed, also expressed full support for my Personal Envoy and for the political process. Both emphasized the strong cultural ties that existed between Mauritania and the Sahrawi people. They confirmed that Mauritania was also ready to scale up its engagement in the political process in the hope of putting an end to the conflict. President Ould Abdel Aziz stressed that finding a peaceful solution to the conflict was crucial for the entire region, which was struggling with drug trafficking, extremism and poverty.

19. During the visit, all interlocutors recognized the key role of MINURSO in maintaining the ceasefire and preventing conflict. They noted that withdrawing MINURSO could have a significant impact on the stability of the region and come at a much higher cost to the international community than the Mission's current budget. Frente POLISARIO, Algeria and Mauritania voiced particular concern over the frustration and disillusionment of some of the youths living in the camps.

20. While Frente POLISARIO stressed that it was ready to engage in negotiations and wanted to avoid the drawing-down of MINURSO, it noted that the Mission was hampered in its ability to fulfil its mandate, owing to the lack of human rights monitoring and interaction with the Sahrawi people and the use of Moroccan licence plates. Frente POLISARIO also expressed disappointment with the United Nations for not implementing paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 2351 (2017) to explore ways to resolve fundamental questions related to the ceasefire, as well as with recent MINURSO reports to the Council, which, they stated, were "incorrect and biased".

21. In Laayoune, Dakhla and Smara, my Personal Envoy met with a large number of locally elected officials. They highlighted developments in the education, health and economic sectors and stated that the people west of the berm were grateful for the support received from Morocco, particularly the $7.7 billion development plan. They noted, however, that it was important to gain clarity on the legal status of Western Sahara, as the current uncertainty hampered foreign investment. While the territory enjoyed stability unlike some of the neighbouring countries in the Sahel zone, they acknowledged that some problems still persisted, such as youth unemployment and a lack of education and health infrastructure.

22. My Personal Envoy also convened meetings in Dakhla and Laayoune with civil society representatives, who presented a wide range of views. Some expressed full support for the Moroccan autonomy plan and urged the United Nations to find a political solution that would allow the people in Tindouf to return to the homeland and benefit from the development seen in the Territory. They expressed gratitude for the financial support provided by Morocco, which had improved infrastructure,

education and health services in the Territory and had increased awareness of human rights.

23. However, other civil society representatives expressed concern about Moroccan-funded development projects in the Territory, claiming that they did not benefit the original Sahrawi population. They stressed that the "elected" officials in the Territory did not represent the Sahrawi people in their entirety, but rather the interests of an elite minority. They expressed frustration over the discriminatory policies imposed on them as Sahrawi activists, which prevented them from gaining access to jobs and economic opportunities and curtailed their freedom to voice political views. Some non-governmental organizations reported serious human rights violations committed by the Moroccan police and expressed concern for their own safety. These non-governmental organizations were unanimous in declaring self-determination to be the only way to resolve the conflict.

24. My Personal Envoy visited a number of development projects financed by Morocco, among them a conference centre and a hospital, as well as a phosphate treatment unit run by the Cherifian Office of Phosphates in Laayoune. He also discussed the socioeconomic development of the Territory with local officials, businesspeople and civil society.

25. In line with paragraph 14 of resolution 2414 (2018), my Personal Envoy briefed the Security Council on 8 August on his mission and his plans for the way forward. Council members had expressed readiness to receive a briefing from my Personal Envoy when deemed appropriate ahead of the renewal of the MINURSO mandate in October. He also informed the Council that he intended to invite the parties and neighbouring States to a first round of direct negotiations in the fourth quarter of the year to build trust and discuss the way forward in the political process. My Personal Envoy received broad support from the Council for his initiative.

26. The Office of my Personal Envoy has been actively engaged in preparatory work for preliminary talks in 2018. This has included discussions with the parties, Security Council members and other interested Member States and regional organizations. Discussions have also been ongoing with United Nations entities and partners, including the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

27. As announced during his briefing to the Security Council on 8 August, on 28 September my Personal Envoy sent invitations to the parties and immediate neighbours for preliminary talks, to be held in Geneva in December. In the invitation letter, my Personal Envoy requested the parties to respond by 20 October. At the time of reporting, Morocco had positively responded on 2 October to the invitation of my Personal Envoy for the initial round-table meeting in Geneva. On 3 October, Frente POLISARIO also accepted the invitation to attend the initial round-table meeting. I am confident that Algeria and Mauritania will respond favourably.

28. From 24 to 28 September, my Personal Envoy visited New York. On the margins of the annual general debate of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, he held extensive consultations with the parties and interested Member States in preparation for the preliminary talks.

IV. Activities of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

A. Operational activities

29. As at 5 September 2018, the military component of MINURSO consisted of 233 personnel, 29 of whom were female, against the authorized strength of 245. From 1 April to 1 September 2018, MINURSO conducted approximately 392,673 km of ground patrols and 328 air patrols. Cooperation between MINURSO team site commanders and the parties was generally satisfactory. The reporting period included monthly visits to approximately 920 units, headquarters and strongpoints and 28 training areas. Military observers also visited 365 observation posts east and west of the berm and monitored more than 292 notified operational activities by both parties.

30. As indicated above, with the withdrawal since 22 April 2018 of Frente POLISARIO "police" from Guerguerat, as of mid-July the Mission's temporary observation post, established in August 2016, had begun to reduce its daily presence, and it will continue to monitor the area through regular ground and air patrols. This will reduce the burden on the MINURSO military component by removing the need to dedicate a team the size of an average team site to this task within the authorized strength. MINURSO will, nonetheless, remain ready to resume a daily presence at short notice should developments in the area require it.

31. Owing to security concerns, ground patrolling east of the berm remains restricted to a 100 km radius from team sites, and no night patrols are conducted on either side of the berm. The General Assembly approved funding in the MINURSO budget for financial year 2018/19 for the Mission's proposed acquisition of protective bunkers for all team sites east of the berm, which will contribute significantly to the existing protection of military observers in those areas, consistent with the recommendations set out in the report entitled "Improving security of United Nations peacekeepers: we need to change the way we are doing business", of 19 December 2017.

32. During the reporting period, MINURSO recorded six violations of military agreement No. 1 by the Royal Moroccan Army, in addition to 10 long-standing violations (ibid., para. 37). Two of those violations were general in nature, three consisted of what military agreement No. 1 defines as "tactical reinforcements" and one was a freedom-of-movement violation.

33. MINURSO recorded 13 general violations of military agreement No. 1 by Frente POLISARIO, 1 tactical reinforcement and 12 freedom-of-movement violations. The number of freedom-of-movement violations has significantly increased since the issuance of my previous report (ibid., para. 38), in addition to the three long-standing violations referred to in the same report.

34. In late March 2018, a MINURSO ground patrol observed that the Royal Moroccan Army was rebuilding a sand wall established in 1987 near Mahbas. The Royal Moroccan Army had requested permission for the work in February, April and June 2017, with MINURSO denying all three requests and noting that rebuilding a previously existing wall would constitute a reinforcement in violation of military agreement No. 1. MINURSO found that a new and larger wall (3–4 metres high and 8–10 metres wide) was being built on top of an existing one of a height of 1 to 1.5 metres high, along a course of 63.8 km running north to south in parallel to the berm. They also observed several new observation posts, as well as four gates in the wall enabling access between units located close to the berm.

35. In April 2018, the violations working group of MINURSO assessed the situation, ruling that the new sand wall constituted a violation of military agreement No. 1. The Royal Moroccan Army notified MINURSO of its intention to remove all observation posts close to the newly established sand wall while retaining the four gates, proposing to maintain a presence of four unarmed soldiers at each gate. The Royal Moroccan Army asserts that the reinforced wall and the new installations are needed to enhance its capacity to prevent drug smuggling and other criminal activities. It also argues that the work constitutes the rehabilitation of an existing structure and, as such, is not a violation; however, military agreement No. 1 does not provide for any exemption for the rehabilitation of existing structures.

36. In late May 2018, MINURSO discovered 13 new Royal Moroccan Army observation posts at a distance of approximately 15 km from the berm in Bir Gandouz, in the southern part of the Territory. The matter was referred to the violations working group, which ruled that the posts constituted a violation of military agreement No. 1. Further ground patrols have discovered 10 additional new observation posts in nearby locations, which at the time of reporting remained under consideration by the violations working group.

37. Shortly after the start of the crisis in Guerguerat in 2016, Frente POLISARIO established four small military positions inside the buffer strip, approximately 20 km south-east of Guerguerat, which were declared violations by MINURSO. After receiving notification from the Force Commander, Frente POLISARIO withdrew from three of those locations, maintaining a small military presence at the "waypoint 6" position (16.6 km east of the Guerguerat road and 4 km south of the berm), which remains a violation. Frente POLISARIO disputes that the post is inside the buffer strip and justifies maintaining it on the basis of its need to continue to monitor developments in Guerguerat and maintain readiness to react should Morocco decide to resume work on the road inside the buffer strip. MINURSO has called on Frente POLISARIO several times to remove the post from the buffer strip.

38. On 24 March 2018, Frente POLISARIO notified MINURSO of its intention to establish nine new military posts near Bir Lahlou, east of the berm, justifying them as needed to respond to increased drug trafficking in the area. MINURSO immediately conducted a reconnaissance of the proposed new positions and, on 27 March 2018, wrote to Frente POLISARIO, warning that the proposed new posts would be a violation of military agreement No. 1. On 3 May 2018, MINURSO received a second notification, proposing only six new observation posts. After a second reconnaissance, on 5 May 2018 MINURSO wrote to Frente POLISARIO, warning that the proposed new posts would also violate the terms of military agreement No. 1. To date, no work has been done to establish any new posts, but MINURSO continues to monitor these locations.

39. Over the course of the reporting period, Morocco provided MINURSO and the Secretariat with various satellite photographs of alleged construction activities east of the berm, which, they suggest, may be in violation of the ceasefire or military agreement No. 1. MINURSO has reconnoitred the areas in question and, in seven cases, found that they did not constitute violations. In another eight cases, including the one in Bir Lahlou mentioned above, investigations are ongoing.

40. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Morocco, during a meeting held in New York on 4 April, protested to me about the planned new positions, calling on MINURSO to condemn them as a violation of military agreement No. 1. He also warned that Morocco would not tolerate such actions by Frente POLISARIO, which would have to take full responsibility for any consequences. The complaint was reiterated in letters from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to my Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

41. On 26 June 2018, the Secretary-General of Frente POLISARIO provided my Personal Envoy with assurances of his intention not to move administrative structures to the Territory, in compliance with resolution 2414 (2018). However, in early May 2018 MINURSO confirmed that a large, single-storey structure was being built near Tifariti, consisting of approximately 36 rooms. The local Frente POLISARIO military representative informed MINURSO military observers that the building was a civilian structure. Access to MINURSO was, however, denied by Frente POLISARIO military personnel guarding the facility. Several subsequent requests for access to the site have also been denied, and the issue has been referred to the violations working group as a freedom-of-movement violation. At this stage, the building is not in use, and it has not been possible to determine its intended function.

42. On 20 May 2018, Frente POLISARIO organized a series of events, including a military parade, in Tifariti to commemorate the forty-fifth anniversary of its founding. MINURSO military observers reported that the preparatory work for the military parade had started approximately 10 days before the event. On 18 May, the MINURSO Force Commander wrote to Frente POLISARIO, warning that participation in the parade by military personnel normally stationed outside the Tifariti military region might constitute a violation of military agreement No. 1. Frente POLISARIO offered assurances that no military personnel or equipment would be brought from other regions or from Rabouni for the parade and celebrations.

43. The parade eventually involved approximately 700 uniformed elements, including cadets, as well as military vehicles and equipment. Prior to the event, the Permanent Representative of Morocco wrote to me denouncing the planned military parade as a violation of military agreement No. 1, a provocation and a destabilizing action violating resolution 2414 (2018). He demanded that MINURSO intervene with Frente POLISARIO to demand that it refrain from the activity. In June 2018, the Mission's violations working group ruled that, although the concentration of troops was in the area of limited restriction, in view of the purely ceremonial and temporary nature of the event, it was not a violation of military agreement No. 1. Frente POLISARIO troops were observed departing from the parade area starting on 21 May 2018.

44. MINURSO also observed two demonstrations by Sahrawi civilians inside the buffer strip close to the berm, both of which the Royal Moroccan Army denounced as provocations in violation of the ceasefire agreements. They were not assessed as violations of military agreement No. 1, as they were civilian in nature.

B. Mine action

45. Landmines and other explosive remnants of war continue to pose a threat to MINURSO personnel and logistical convoys. As at 1 September 2018, 48 known cluster strike areas and 26 known minefields remained to be addressed east of the berm. The Mission's Mine Action Coordination Centre, operated by the United Nations Mine Action Service, continues to function from Tindouf.

46. East of the berm, the Mine Action Coordination Centre conducted survey and clearance of 2,086,639 m^2 of land contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war, releasing 41 medium- and high-priority cluster strike areas and one minefield. A total of 59,320m^2, equivalent to 7.4 km, of mission patrol and logistic routes have been verified east of the berm, facilitating the movements of MINURSO military observers. A total of 458 items of explosive remnants of war were destroyed, consisting of 336 submunitions and 122 other explosive remnants of war. The Centre conducted landmine safety training for 42 newly arrived civilian and military personnel of MINURSO and five landmine safety refresher training sessions for 37

personnel. The Centre also conducted 33 quality assurance assessments of its operations. Frente POLISARIO destroyed a stockpile of 2,500 anti-personnel mines in compliance with Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action, signed in 2005. The last phase of anti-personnel mine stockpile destruction is planned for November 2018, whereby Frente POLISARIO will have destroyed all of its declared anti-personnel mine stockpile.

47. The Mine Action Coordination Centre, through its local partner east of the berm, the Sahrawi Mine Action Coordination Office, remains in contact with Frente POLISARIO on matters related to mine action to better ascertain the impact of landmines and other explosive remnants of war in Western Sahara. The Centre also continues to provide technical assistance to the Office in the areas of operations, data management, administration and finance.

48. Since April 2018, west of the berm, the Royal Moroccan Army has reported one injury to military personnel due to an accident related to landmines or explosive remnants of war. The Royal Moroccan Army reported the clearance of more than 84 million m^2 of land west of the berm and the destruction of 344 items, consisting of 268 items of unexploded ordnance, 74 anti-personnel mines and 2 anti-vehicle mines.

C. Security

49. The general threat assessment conducted by MINURSO as part of the broader 2018 security risk management concept identified a moderate security level for all zones in the Mission's area of responsibility. The highest threat level remains in the areas east of the berm, owing to previous explicit threats from extremist elements in the Sahel. MINURSO continues to employ mitigation measures in line with a security risk mitigation priority list established in February 2017. Remaining measures and additional improvements will be implemented during the 2018/19 financial year, with emphasis placed on team sites located east of the berm.

D. Substantive civilian activities

50. From 28 June to 1 July 2018, MINURSO provided substantive and logistical support for the visit of my Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, as well as for his visit to Rabouni to meet with Frente POLISARIO authorities.

51. Frente POLISARIO has yet to agree to officially receiving my Special Representative at its headquarters in Rabouni, in accordance with long-established practice. Frente POLISARIO insists that the meeting be held in the Territory of Western Sahara, although meetings with other senior officials continue to take place in Rabouni. On 18 April, I wrote to Secretary-General Ghali requesting him to resume the accepted practice, but as yet there has been no change in its position. This situation represents a significant obstacle to the relationship between MINURSO and Frente POLISARIO, which is currently limited to telephone and written contacts between my Special Representative and the Frente POLISARIO coordinator. Day-to-day working-level contacts continue to be managed by the Mission's liaison office in Tindouf, while my Special Representative has met with the Frente POLISARIO coordinator on one occasion outside the Mission area. Since the beginning of 2018, Frente POLISARIO has demanded that all meetings with the MINURSO Force Commander also take place in the Territory, with the effect that all senior military contacts with Frente POLISARIO are also stalled.

52. Frente POLISARIO argues that MINURSO regularly meets with the Moroccan coordinator in Laayoune and should, therefore, be free to meet with Frente POLISARIO inside the Territory. That position is part of a broader request by Frente POLISARIO for equal treatment with Morocco as a party to the conflict. The Moroccan authorities argue that any meetings held by MINURSO in the Territory with any representatives of Frente POLISARIO, who are normally based in Rabouni, would constitute a recognition of Frente POLISARIO control over the Territory east of the berm, which Morocco denies, as well as an implicit and unacceptable recognition of the "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic".

53. Within the constraints imposed by the lack of access to local interlocutors west of the berm, MINURSO continued to provide regular reporting and analysis to the Secretariat on developments in and affecting Western Sahara. To improve situational awareness and coordination between its substantive civilian and military components, MINURSO introduced a new joint mission analysis structure, which brings civilian and military analysts together on a daily basis to combine their assessments and ensure follow-up. The Mission also started to implement the United Nations situational awareness programme and continued to receive regular visits by representatives of Member States.

54. With the exception of the obstacles highlighted above with regard to interaction between my Special Representative and Frente POLISARIO, the Mission's access to civil society and other relevant interlocutors east of the berm and in the refugee camps near Tindouf remained unhindered.

E. Challenges to the operations of the Mission

55. As previously reported (ibid., paras. 52–54), the diverging interpretations by the parties of the MINURSO mandate continue to pose a major challenge to the Mission's operations, which frequently lead to vocal and systematic criticism of its activities. In particular, the Mission's press releases and statements are met with negative responses by the parties, each trying to ensure that its vision of the MINURSO mandate and the status of the conflict and of the Territory are fully reflected. More recently, the Mission's prerogative to issue public statements has been questioned.

56. The Mission's lack of access to interlocutors continues to limit its ability to form an independent assessment of the situation in Western Sahara west of the berm. The perception of the Mission's impartiality also remains affected by the requirement by Morocco that MINURSO use Moroccan vehicle number plates west of the berm (ibid., para. 57).

57. Security remains the highest concern for the operation of MINURSO, especially with respect to the Mission's ground patrols and resupply convoys travelling through the desert areas east of the berm. MINURSO has full confidence in the commitment of Frente POLISARIO to protecting MINURSO static team sites, but the nature of the extremist threat from other points in the Sahel, and risks to patrols away from team sites, remain a concern. The General Assembly approved funding for MINURSO to acquire a third helicopter in the second half of the year, which will allow for more frequent aerial reconnaissance in advance of logistics convoys and the replacement of ground patrols in remote and at-risk areas.

V. Humanitarian activities and human rights

A. Persons unaccounted for in the conflict

58. The International Committee of the Red Cross continued, as a neutral intermediary, to seek opportunities to enhance dialogue and facilitate the exchange of information between the parties, in respect of individuals who are still unaccounted for in relation to past hostilities.

B. Assistance to the protection of Western Saharan refugees

59. UNHCR continued to provide international protection and, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Sahrawi refugees living in the five camps near Tindouf. For planning purposes, a multi-agency vulnerability assessment is currently under way.

60. WFP continued to cover the refugees' basic food and nutrition needs through the monthly distribution of 125,000 basic food rations. In March 2018, a food security assessment was conducted to determine the level of food insecurity among the refugee population and will inform future planning for general food assistance. Malnutrition and anaemia prevalence remained public health concerns. UNHCR and WFP continued to work closely together on the prevention and treatment of anaemia, stunting and malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women, girls and young children. WFP provided mid-morning snacks to more than 41,000 boys and girls in primary schools and kindergartens to encourage attendance and retention. To contribute to resilience and improve food security, WFP scaled up its hydroponic project to produce fresh animal fodder and initiated a fish farm project.

61. UNICEF is also present in the camps and provides support in maternal and child health programmes, including support for the expanded programme of immunization, child protection and education activities.

62. The main challenge for humanitarian actors remained the funding shortfall. In May 2018, the three agencies, along with 11 international non-governmental organizations, launched an appeal for $137 million to support essential lifesaving activities in the biennium 2018–2019. United Nations agencies have so far received only 41 per cent of the required budget, with UNHCR being the lowest-funded (12 per cent). Owing to chronic underfunding, UNHCR also struggled to meet international standards in the areas of protection, shelter, health, education, energy provision and livelihoods. In addition, UNHCR could provide an average of only 10 litres of drinking water per person per day, which is half of the minimum standard of 20 litres per person per day.

C. Confidence-building measures

63. The confidence-building measures, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1282 (1999) and subsequent resolutions, to allow family links between Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps and their communities of origin in the Territory of Western Sahara remain on hold.

D. Human rights

64. During the reporting period, OHCHR[1] received a number of reports alleging that demonstrators had been forcibly dispersed during protests related to the right to self-determination, the disposal of natural wealth and resources and the rights of detainees.

65. OHCHR continues to receive reports alleging lack of accountability for human rights violations perpetrated against Sahrawis, including arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment. As at 15 August 2018, a national preventive mechanism had yet to be established as envisaged in the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified in 2014 (ibid., para. 65).

66. OHCHR continues to be concerned by reports of alleged excessive surveillance operations targeting human rights defenders and journalists, particularly those located in Western Sahara. The Moroccan authorities continue to restrict access to Western Sahara for foreign visitors, including journalists and lawyers from Morocco.[2]

67. In its concluding observations of July 2018 on the fourth periodic report of Algeria, the Human Rights Committee, reviewing compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, raised concern about the "de facto devolution of authority to the Frente POLISARIO, especially jurisdictional authority", in the camps at Tindouf, and about the reports that, as a result, victims of violations of provisions of the Covenant in the camps do not have access to an effective remedy in the State party's courts (see CCPR/C/DZA/CO/4, para. 9).

VI. African Union

68. At its thirty-first session, held in Nouakchott on 1 and 2 July 2018, the Assembly of the African Union considered a report prepared by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the issue of Western Sahara and, in its decision 693 (XXXI), decided to establish an African mechanism, comprising the Troika of the African Union[3] as well as the Chairperson of the Commission, to support the United Nations-led efforts and to report regularly on the implementation of its mandate to the Assembly and, as necessary, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the level of Heads of State and Government. It also decided that the issue of Western Sahara would be raised only within that framework and at that level. In the same decision, the Assembly requested the Chairperson of the Commission to initiate the required consultations for the reactivation of the African Union Office to MINURSO in Laayoune and appealed to African Union member States to support the United Nations-led efforts. Further to a request by the Chairperson of the Commission, the decision was brought to the attention of the United Nations Security Council on 7 August 2018.

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[1] Gaps in human rights reporting persist, owing to the limited monitoring capacity of OHCHR. OHCHR was able to conduct four assessment missions in Western Sahara, in 2006, 2014 and 2015. In its resolution 2414 (2018), the Security Council encouraged enhanced cooperation with OHCHR, including through facilitating visits to the region.

[2] In December 2016, the Human Rights Committee recommended that Morocco ensure that any breach of privacy was in keeping with the principles of legality, proportionality and necessity (see CCPR/C/MAR/CO/6, para. 38).

[3] The Troika is composed of the outgoing, the current and the incoming Chairpersons of the African Union.

VII. Financial aspects

69. The General Assembly, by its resolution 72/301 and decision 72/558 of 5 July 2018, appropriated the amount of $52.4 million gross for the maintenance of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. Should the Security Council decide to extend the Mission's mandate beyond 31 October 2018, the cost of maintaining the Mission would be limited to the amounts approved by the Assembly.

70. As at 11 September 2018, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for MINURSO amounted to $50.9 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $2,628.2 million.

71. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 October 2017, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned major equipment and self-sustainment has been made for the period up to 30 September 2017, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VIII. Independent review of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

72. In line with my request to initiate a comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations, a review of MINURSO was undertaken during the reporting period to examine how the Mission could best respond to the challenges it faces. The review was led by an independent external expert, Diane Corner, former Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. Ms. Corner was supported by a team comprising representatives from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and from the Department of Field Support. The MINURSO review team held consultations with stakeholders at Headquarters, and also meetings in New York with the Permanent Representative of Morocco and with the Representative of Frente POLISARIO. The team travelled to the Mission area from 16 to 22 June 2018 to assess the work of MINURSO, including through field visits to team sites both east and west of the berm and to the Mission's liaison office in Tindouf.

73. The review determined that currently, MINURSO performs three decisive conflict prevention functions. First, it prevents ceasefire-related incidents from escalating, in an environment where there are no direct contacts between the two sides, both of which rely on MINURSO to adjudicate their various allegations. Second, MINURSO ensures that the situation on the ground supports the efforts of my Personal Envoy to revive the political process. Third, the Mission's presence contributes to the maintenance of regional stability in the Maghreb.

74. The review found that there is significant scope for technical improvement in the Mission's ability to carry out monitoring and conflict mitigation activities, observing that the extensive use of largely predictable and repetitive ground patrols does not optimize the Mission's resources. It was felt that attempts to achieve full theatre awareness of some 2,500 km of berm are unrealistic and that the military component should define its output less in terms of quantity and more in terms of quality. To achieve such improvements, the consent of the parties would be required.

75. The review also noted the importance of restarting the currently suspended UNHCR-led programme of confidence-building measures as a significant instrument in supporting the peace process. The review also commended the MINURSO mine action programme, noting that every effort should be made to persuade the parties that demining and the removal of explosive remnants of war should be expanded and

strengthened. The review also expressed some reservations with regard to certain administrative requirements placed on MINURSO operations, among them the insistence of Morocco that MINURSO vehicles bear Moroccan rather than United Nations licence plates and that passports be stamped in Laayoune.

IX. Observations and recommendations

76. I am encouraged that the parties, despite occasional violations and tensions, continue to maintain the ceasefire and generally observe related military agreements. I am concerned, however, about the rise in tension between the parties and increasingly uncompromising rhetoric. Maintaining peaceful and stable conditions on the ground is essential to providing a climate for the resumption of the political process. I call on the parties to continue engaging with the Mission to resolve the remaining long-standing and recent violations, in full respect for the Mission's mandate, the ceasefire and related military agreements.

77. My Personal Envoy's visit to the region allowed him to further improve his understanding of the current situation in Western Sahara. The commitment of Frente POLISARIO not to go back to Guerguerat and not to move new institutions to the area east of the berm are positive developments and demonstrate its readiness to come back to the negotiating table. Algeria and Mauritania have both confirmed their readiness to take on a more active role in the negotiating process. The willingness on the part of Morocco to facilitate the visit to Western Sahara is also an encouraging sign.

78. I urge the parties and the neighbours to respond positively to the invitation of my Personal Envoy to come to the negotiating table in good faith and without preconditions. I also call on Security Council members, friends of Western Sahara and other relevant actors to encourage the parties and the neighbours to accept the invitation of my Personal Envoy.

79. I am concerned by the disruption in the relationship between MINURSO and Frente POLISARIO, which prevents my Special Representative and the Force Commander from meeting with their counterparts. I therefore call once again on Frente POLISARIO to resume the meetings with senior MINURSO leadership in Rabouni, in accordance with the long-established practice.

80. The Mission's role is predicated on its ability to impartially and independently fulfil the mandate set forth by the Security Council, and I call on the parties to fully respect that independence. I also call on the Security Council to support the Mission in that respect.

81. MINURSO continues to rely on unarmed military observers to implement its ceasefire monitoring tasks. I remain deeply concerned about the security and safety of MINURSO personnel in Western Sahara, who remain extremely vulnerable to a variety of threats, especially from criminal and terrorist groups, particularly east of the berm. I am grateful for the support of the Security Council and the General Assembly for the Mission's efforts to improve its security resources, and seek the continued support of Member States in that respect.

82. Following the independent review, I look forward to the implementation of measures in close cooperation with the parties to increase the Mission's operational effectiveness, including by modernizing its approach to monitoring and observation tasks and making the best use of innovative techniques and new technologies, with a view to making the MINURSO military monitoring operation more effective and leaner. Such measures would be aimed at, inter alia, enhancing early warning, ensuring better compliance with the ceasefire agreement, timely investigation of

allegations of violations of the ceasefire and engagement at flashpoints to defuse tensions and prevent escalation.

83. I note the number of female personnel in the MINURSO military component, and I call on troop-contributing countries to support MINURSO in its efforts to achieve greater gender balance.

84. I call for the full and sustained support of the parties to ensure the implementation of technical improvements to the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate, following the independent review. I also invite the Security Council and other Member States to encourage the parties to resume the UNHCR-led programme of confidence-building measures.

85. As noted in paragraph 7 above regarding paragraph 9 of Security Council resolution 2414 (2018), the two parties hold divergent views on questions related to the ceasefire and related agreements, and neither has expressed an interest in making adjustments.

86. MINURSO remains a core element of the United Nations effort to reach a just, durable and mutually acceptable political solution to the conflict in Western Sahara that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. MINURSO has consistently proved to be an effective conflict prevention tool since its inception in 1991, a period that has seen no exchanges of fire between the parties. The Mission's mediation efforts have proved to be successful in de-escalating serious tensions, in resolving potential violations of the military agreements and in maintaining the parties' confidence in the ceasefire arrangements. Notwithstanding its constraints and limited resources, the Mission successfully keeps the Secretariat and the Security Council informed of developments in and related to Western Sahara and supports regional stability. The role of MINURSO has been critical to allow for my Personal Envoy, through intensive efforts over the past six months, to make notable progress towards a political solution to the question of Western Sahara. I therefore recommend that the Council extend the mandate of MINURSO for one year, until 31 October 2019, to give my Personal Envoy the space and time for his efforts to create the conditions necessary for the political process to move ahead.

87. I once again note with great concern the lack of funding for humanitarian assistance despite increasing needs. I therefore call upon the international community to continue its support for humanitarian programming.

88. A lack of communication between the people living on both sides of the berm and misperceptions regarding the reality of life on the other side were apparent during the mission of my Personal Envoy. I therefore encourage the people living in Western Sahara to open communication channels with their relatives on different sides of the berm, to build confidence and develop ideas for a peaceful future.

89. I urge the parties to respect and promote human rights, including in addressing outstanding human rights issues and enhancing cooperation with OHCHR and the United Nations human rights mechanisms, and to facilitate their follow-up missions. Independent, impartial, comprehensive and sustained monitoring of the human rights situation is necessary to ensure the protection of all people in Western Sahara.

90. I thank my Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Horst Koehler, for his continuing efforts. I also thank my Special Representative for Western Sahara and Head of MINURSO, Colin Stewart, and Major General Wang Xiaojun for their dedicated leadership of MINURSO. Finally, I thank the men and women of MINURSO for their continued commitment, under difficult and challenging circumstances, to fulfilling the Mission's mandate.

Annex I

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

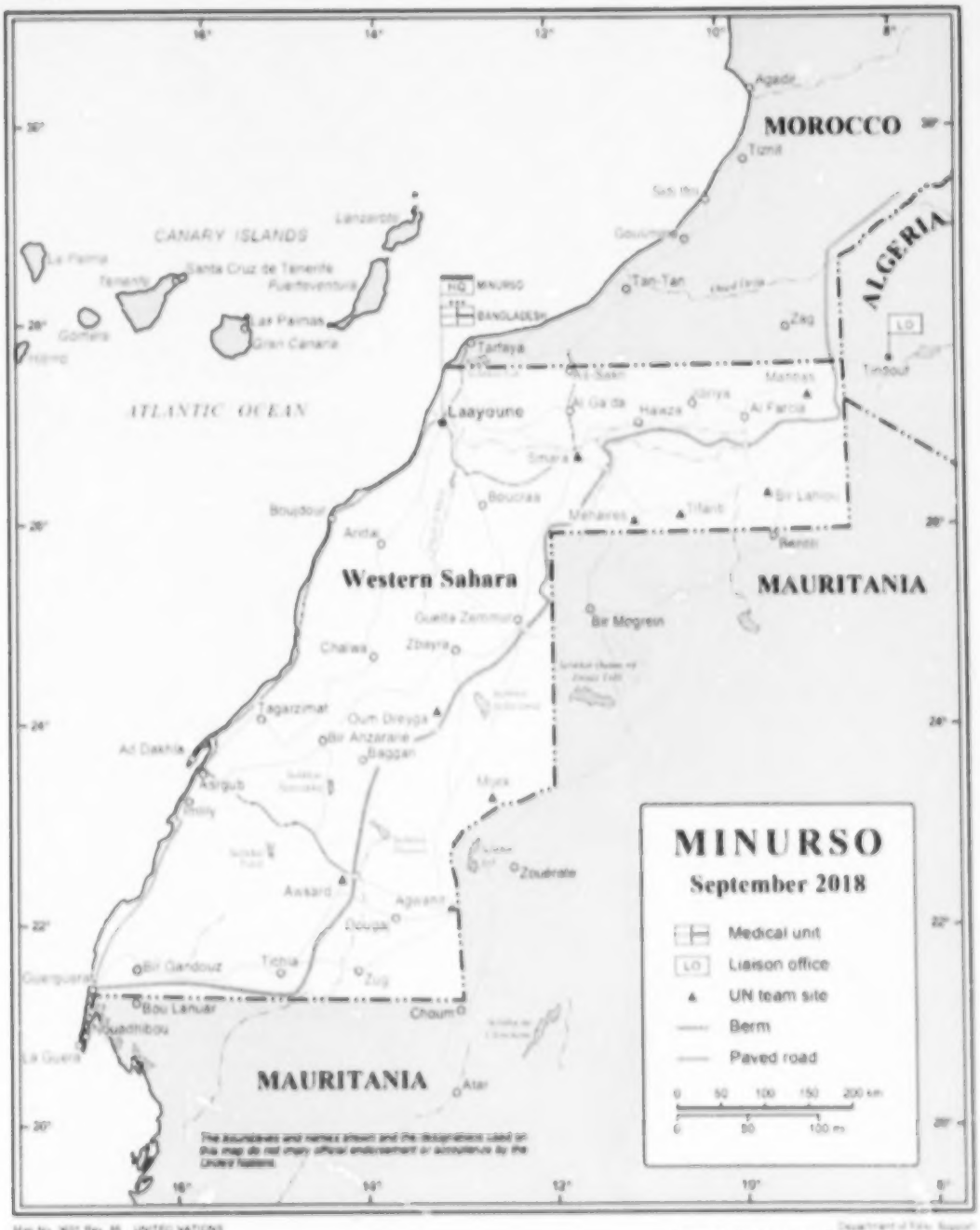
Contributions as at 5 September 2018

Country	*Military observers*[a]	*Troops*[a]	*Civilian police*[b]	*Total*
Argentina	2	–	–	2
Austria	5	–	–	5
Bangladesh	8	20	–	28
Brazil	10	–	–	10
Bhutan	2	–	–	2
China	12	–	–	12
Croatia	7	–	–	7
Djibouti	2	–	–	2
Ecuador	4	–	–	4
Egypt	17	–	–	17
El Salvador	1	–	–	1
France	2	–	–	2
Germany	3	–	–	3
Ghana	8	7	–	15
Guinea	5	–	–	5
Honduras	12	–	–	12
Hungary	6	–	–	6
India	3	–	–	3
Indonesia	3	–	–	3
Ireland	3	–	–	3
Italy	2	–	–	2
Jordan	2	–	–	2
Kazakhstan	5	–	–	5
Malawi	3	–	–	3
Malaysia	5	–	–	5
Mexico	4	–	–	4
Mongolia	1	–	–	1
Montenegro	2	–	–	2
Nepal	5	–	–	5
Nigeria	6	–	–	6
Pakistan	14	–	–	14
Poland	2	–	–	2
Portugal	–	–	1	1
Republic of Korea	5	–	–	5
Russian Federation	15	–	–	15
Sri Lanka	4	–	–	4
Sweden	2	–	–	2
Switzerland	2	–	–	2
Togo	2	–	–	2
Total	**196**	**27**	**1**	**224**

[a] Authorized strength is 246, including the Force Commander.
[b] Authorized strength is 12.
[c] Actual strength on the ground, for military and civilian police, including the Force Commander.

Annex II

Map


MOROCCO
ALGERIA
MAURITANIA
Western Sahara
MAURITANIA
CANARY ISLANDS
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Agadir
Tiznit
Sidi Ifni
Guelmim
Tan-Tan
Zag
Tindouf
Tarfaya
Laayoune
Smara
Bir Lahlou
Mahbes
Bir Mogrein
Boujdour
Aousserd
Dakhla
Chalwa
Zbeyra
Guelta Zemmur
Tagarzimat
Oum Dreyga
Bir Anzarane
Baggari
Ad Dakhla
Asirgub
Mijek
Zouerate
Awsard
Agueinit
Bir Gandouz
Tichla
Zug
Bou Lanuar
Choum
Ouadhibou
La Guera
Atar
HQ MINURSO
BANGLADESH
LO
Liaison office
MINURSO
September 2018
Medical unit
UN team site
Berm
Paved road
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

United Nations S/2018/890

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 October 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 3 October 2018 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

Further to the letter dated 9 August 2018 from Ambassador Karen Pierce, I have the honour to confirm that the members of the Security Council have agreed to send a mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 5 to 7 October 2018. The members have agreed on the terms of reference of the mission (see annex).

The mission will be co-led by Ambassador François Delattre (France), Ambassador Job Obiang Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) and Ms. Verónica Cordova Soria, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Following consultations with the members, it has been agreed that the composition of the mission will be as follows:

Ms. Verónica Cordova Soria (Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Ambassador Wu Haitao (China)
Ambassador Gbolié Desiré Wulfran Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire)
Ambassador Job Obiang Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea)
Ambassador Mahlet Hailu Guadey (Ethiopia)
Ambassador François Delattre (France)
Mr. Kanat Tumysh (Kazakhstan)
Ambassador Mansour Alotaibi (Kuwait)
Ambassador Karel van Oosterom (Netherlands)
Ambassador Francisco Tenya (Peru)
Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland)
Mr. Dmitry A. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation)
Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden)
Ambassador Stephen Hickey (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Mr. Austin M. Smith (United States of America)

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sacha Sergio **Llorentty Soliz**
President of the Security Council

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Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2018 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

Terms of reference of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. The Security Council will carry out its mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 5 to 7 October 2018 within the framework of resolution 2409 (2018), the press statements dated 13 August, 22 March and 16 January 2018 and the joint communiqué dated 19 July 2018 issued by members of the Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

2. The members of the mission will meet the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Prime Minister and members of the Government, leaders of the main political groupings and parties, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Congolese National Episcopal Conference, as well as civil society organizations, including women's organizations, and the leadership of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), among others.

3. In line with the framework set out in paragraph 1 above, the Security Council will:

(a) Welcome the steps taken recently in the electoral process, call upon the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Independent National Electoral Commission and all stakeholders to work together towards the holding of elections on 23 December 2018 and underline the importance of the entire Congolese political class and the institutions responsible for organizing inclusive, credible and transparent elections remaining committed to ensuring the successful conclusion of the electoral process, leading to a peaceful transfer of power, in accordance with the Constitution and the political agreement of 31 December 2016;

(b) Encourage all Congolese stakeholders to create all conditions necessary to ensure an environment conducive to the peaceful and inclusive conduct of political activities and that the elections take place with the requisite conditions of transparency, credibility and inclusivity and security, including the full and effective participation of women at all stages, and are conducted in accordance with the Constitution and international obligations;

(c) Encourage the Independent National Electoral Commission to ensure that any request to MONUSCO for logistical and technical support is made without further delay in order to enable it to provide its support, reaffirm the readiness of the United Nations to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the organization of presidential, legislative and provincial elections and, if necessary, clarify plans for national and international observation of the elections;

(d) Stress that the effective, swift and sincere implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016, including the agreement's confidence-building measures, as well as respect for fundamental rights and the electoral timeline, are essential for peaceful and credible elections on 23 December, a democratic transition of power and the peace and stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(e) Assess the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the ability of MONUSCO to implement its mandate in accordance with resolution 2409 (2018) and, in particular, to respond to current and ongoing security threats;

(f) Express deep concern regarding the persistence of violence in some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and the Kasais, as well as regarding the humanitarian situation in the country;

(g) Assess whether the mechanisms for intra-mission coordination have been strengthened for the protection of civilians, as well as assess progress in the implementation of the measures taken to transform MONUSCO and improve its performance in implementing its mandate;

(h) Encourage the Government to take further action, in accordance with national and international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and with the support of MONUSCO in accordance with its mandate, to end the threat posed by armed groups, especially the Allied Democratic Forces;

(i) Welcome regional initiatives and efforts to enhance cooperation towards the neutralization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of MONUSCO and the Government, and encourage further action against individuals and organizations who engage in the illegal exploitation of natural resources;

(j) Urge the Government to hold accountable any actor responsible for violations of international humanitarian law or violations and abuses of human rights, as applicable, in particular those that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity;

(k) Reiterate their full support for the Government, in particular the Ministry of Health, regarding the efforts to combat the Ebola outbreak, as well as the support of MONUSCO, United Nations agencies and international partners;

(l) Reiterate their full support for MONUSCO and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in efficiently implementing their mandate in full;

(m) Express their determination to continue to closely follow the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the security conditions on the ground and the efforts to successfully conclude the electoral process.

United Nations S/2018/891

Security Council

Distr.: General
3 October 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 3 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to you regarding the brutal terrorist attack that took place in the city of Ahvaz, the capital of the Khouzestan Province of the Islamic Republic of Iran, committed on 22 September 2018, during an annual parade on the first day of "the sacred defence week" commemorating the martyrs and sacrifices of the eight-year aggression by Saddam against Iran.

As a result of this terrorist act, 24 Iranian citizens, including a 4-year-old child, were killed and 60 others wounded.

Almost immediately, the al-Ahvaziya group spokesman shamelessly and openly claimed responsibility for this heinous crime in an interview with a television channel broadcasting from the United Kingdom. The group, whose members are recruited, trained, armed and funded by a regional country, is also responsible for a series of terrorist attacks in the past, resulting in the killing of 20 civilians and the injury of more than 250 others. It is worth noting that, later that day, Daesh also accepted responsibility for the crime, and subsequent information confirms its leading role in planning and guiding this terrorist attack.

In my previous letters dated 4 May 2017 (S/2017/393) and 8 June 2017 (S/2017/489), I warned against the irresponsible, provocative and ill-fated policies of the regime of Saudi Arabia in promoting and financing extremist groups and its short-sighted and self-defeating adventurism in the region, which is in clear violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. There is substantiated evidence that the al-Ahvaziya terrorist group is supported and funded by Saudi Arabia, and therefore it should be held accountable for this heinous terrorist attack. Moreover, this terrorist act should be considered as an example of the Saudi plan to "work so that the battle is ... inside Iran", as openly stated by the Saudi Defence Minister on 2 May 2017.

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the press statement issued on 24 September 2018 by the Security Council, through which the Council members "condemned in the strongest terms the heinous and cowardly terrorist attack" in Ahvaz and "underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all other relevant authorities in this regard".

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To that end, all States Members of the United Nations are invited, in fulfilling their commitments to suppress terrorism, to extradite those who aided or abetted these terrorist crimes as well as any person who supports, facilitates or participates or attempts to participate in the financing, planning or preparation of such terrorist crimes on the basis of the principle of extradite or prosecute, and to fully cooperate with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the investigation of the matter so as to ensure that the persons responsible are brought to justice. Moreover, those countries who harbour members of this terrorist group are called upon to deny members of this terrorist group safe haven.

The international community, in the interest of world peace as well as the peace and security of such a volatile region as the Middle East, should not tolerate the further spread of takfirist ideology, the incitement to terrorism and violent extremism and the sponsorship of terrorism by a certain country in the Persian Gulf.

Seizing this opportunity, I would like to further bring to your attention that the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, acting in legitimate self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, took limited and measured military action on 1 October 2018 in Syria, targeting terrorist elements that are also linked to the terrorist act in Ahvaz. The attack was precise, leaving no collateral damage to civilians and civilian assets in the area.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/892

Security Council

Distr.: General
5 October 2018
English
Original: Russian

Letter dated 3 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for 2 and 3 October 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 3 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (2 October 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The number of violations by illegal armed groups active in the Idlib de-escalation area has not decreased.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported seven incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: five in Ladhiqiyah, one in Aleppo and one in Idlib.

The Turkish representative office has reported one incident of gunfire in Hama Governorate.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: in Hatla, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, 450 food parcels with a total weight of 1.95 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,949 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,044.92 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (3 October 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 11 incidents of gunfire: 8 in Ladhiqiyah Governorate and 3 in Aleppo Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation: in Sumrah, Suwayda' Governorate, 306 food parcels with a total weight of 1.29 tons were distributed.

In total, 1,950 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 3,046.21 tons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is 2,518.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.